The Original Custom Bike Magazine

BACK STREET HEROES

DEC 2025
ISSUE #500

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500th
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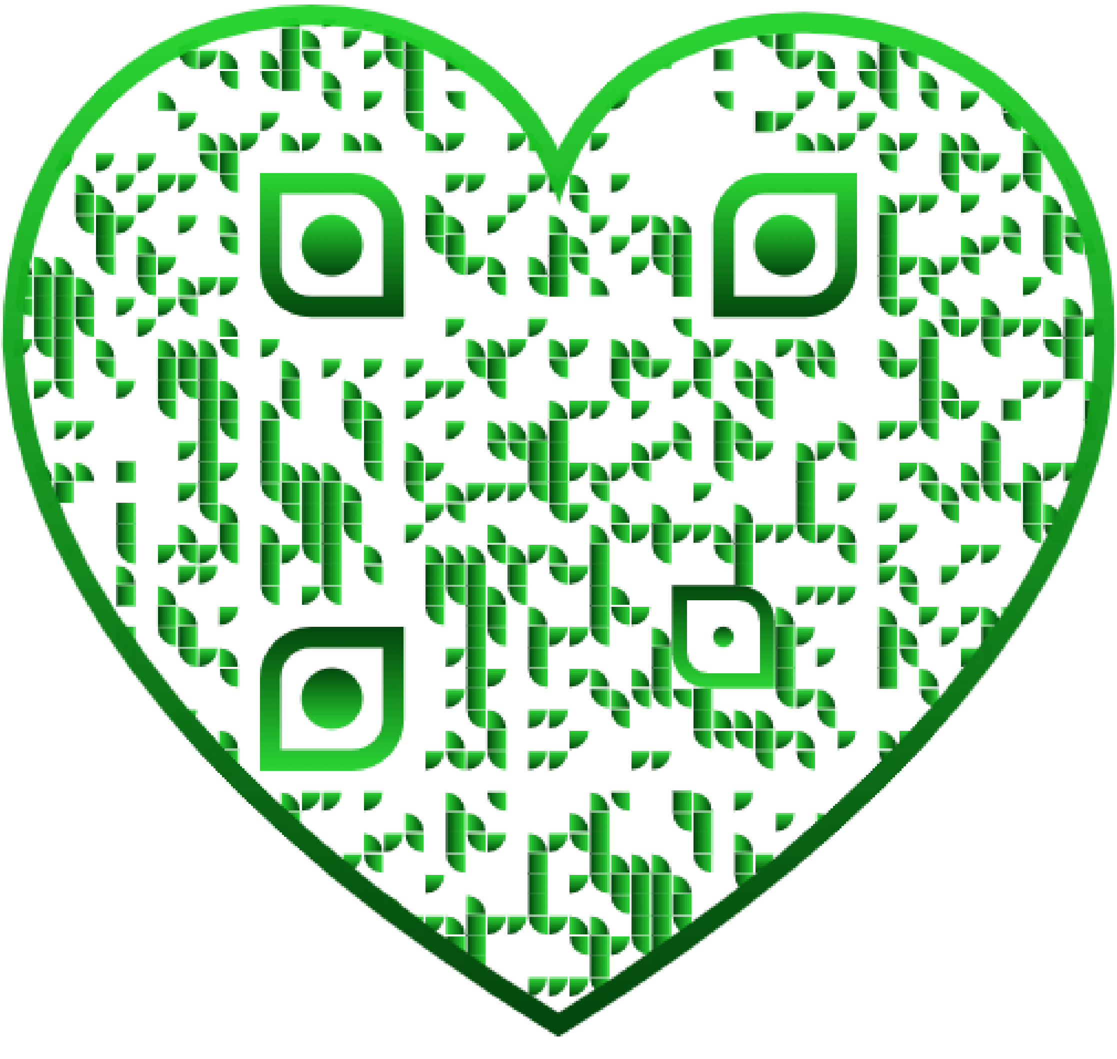
500TH ISSUE



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Welcome To The Dark Side

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The Original Custom Bike Magazine
BACK STREET HEROES
ISSUE 500
ABSINTHE
WIN! 500th ISSUE MASSIVE FAT SKELETON COMP!
500TH ISSUE

Editorial

WE DID IT – 500 ISSUES! 5-BLOODY-HUNDRED! CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? I BET WHEN THE LATE MR MYATT AND THE, ER, CURRENT MR MCFARLANE STARTED THIS 'ERE MAGAZINE SOME 42 YEARS AGO BACK IN 1983, THEY COULDN'T EVEN CONCEIVE OF SUCH A THING!

'Course, the world's changed dramatically since those days, and we've had to change with it, but I'd like to think the magazine still has today, at heart, the same core values as it did when it was launched all those years ago. Things, and people, have come and gone, but we still feature the best bikes of the British custom bike scene, and go to and cover the best events on the calendar, too, and we're still a magazine for bikers, real bikers, written, photographed, and put together by people who are part of that world, rather than journalists who happen to have motorcycle licences. We do, and always have done, live and breathe bikes (and, yes, because of that we're suffering the long-term effects of such), and none of us have any plans to change that.

These days the act of actually creating BSH is very different to what it was back then. When I started at The Towers in '94 (Gaz, our designer, was there even before that), there were three of us doing the editorial side of things, and we all sat together, talked, laughed, and came up with shi… er, stuff… actually, no, 'shit' is a better, more descriptive, word cos what we came up with was, in many ways, just that – shit. Some of it went, as shit should do, down the toilet, but a lot of it was, as our Colonial cousins'd say, cool shit, and appeared in both BSH and the late, lamented Streetfighters magazine, too. We and, at first Gaz and a couple of like-minded others, went to the pub across the road every Friday lunchtime, but that soon developed into most of the company ending up there and I don't think it's too much of an exaggeration to say that a very large part of both BSH and SF in the 1990s was conceived (and, in some cases, written) in the pub on long, long Friday afternoons (how none of us got done for drink-driving in those halcyon days is an absolute mystery, it really is).

These days, though, I work over 'ere in Suffolk, Gaz's in North Wales, Si the ad bloke's in Horncastle, and even the regular freelancers, Bosun, Del, John, Louise, Mr Bridges, Norm, Lauren, etc., are scattered all across the country, and we rarely meet up at all. Despite that, though, the fact that BSH has made it to 500 issues and is, despite various trials and challenges, going to go on for as long as you lot keep buying it, is testament to the esteem we hold this 'ere magazine in. It had a formative effect on many of us back in the day, and we see ourselves as guardians of that. Yeah, it doesn't pay very well (especially now) and, yeah, it's bloody hard work, but the world just wouldn't be the same without it, y'know?

So, if you've been with us since the beginning, or are a recent(ish) convert, or you're getting back into it, thank you for helping us make 500 issues – we, genuinely, couldn't've done it without you. I can't say we're going to make another 500 cos all of us, both magazine folk and you lot out there, are closer to the end of our biking (and actual) lives than we are to the beginning, but we'll have a damn good go at it.

NIK & ALL, PAST AND PRESENT, AT BSH

HUGE 500th ISSUE

FAT SKELETON GEAR COMP!

TO CELEBRATE THE MOMENTOUS MILESTONE OF BSH HAVING REACHED 500 ISSUES, PAUL AT FAT SKELETON, ALSO CELEBRATING THEIR 21st YEAR OF BRINGING SOME OF THE BEST BIKER GEAR, AT VERY COMPETITIVE PRICES, TO THE BIKER WORLD, HAVE PROMISED TO GIVE ONE LUCKY READER THE OPPORTUNITY TO WIN £500 OF GEAR FROM THEIR ON-LINE EMPORIUM AND, ALSO, 20 RUNNER-UP PRIZES OF A STEALTH MODULAR HELMET WORTH £99.99, 10 FURTHER RUNNER-UP PRIZES OF THEIR DAYTONA24 LOW LIGHT REACTIVE LENS RIDING GLASSES, AND NO LESS THAN ANOTHER 80 RUNNER-UP PRIZES OF GIFT CARDS WORTH BETWEEN £10 AND £20 WHICH CAN BE USED TOWARDS ANY PURCHASES MADE AT **WWW.FATSKELETON.CO.UK**

WE here at BSH have a lot of time for the ethos of Fat Skeleton; small independent firms like them may never be able to compete with the discounts and range that mega online generic sites can offer but, if you want good solid advice on products, and some of the best customer service there is, then check them out on-line or, better still, go and visit their showroom at Hucknall in Nottinghamshire.

Once regulars on the UK rally scene, since 'retiring' from it they're busier than ever, something that's shown by the number of five-star reviews of their products and customer service, and they're still committed to giving the biker community they've served for years the best selection of custom rider gear and service they can.

Paul says: "I guess I'm a bit old school in the respect that I'd rather spend my time finding the best, and more unusual and 'quirky, lines than post inane 'content' on social media or court influencers or celebs to promote Fat Skeleton." He's an old-school biker. "Like most of our generation, I've been riding since I was 16, and I'm a Life Member of MAG, and was the founder member of the East Midlands Virago Owners Club (now known as the VSOC – Virago Star Owners Club) back in 1995. I currently ride a Heritage Softail (best bike I've ever ridden… and there've been a few!) and, when I sling my leg over it, it's to get out and pursue my life-long passion for riding, not to 'create content'; my 'Vlog', or whatever it might be called these days, is stored in the depths of my memory – tens of thousands of miles and nearly five decades of UK, European and American road trips.

"We're open weekdays from 10am-4pm, but if you want to pop over on a weekend, give us a call on **0115 9635837** and, if at all possible, we'll arrange for one of our crew to come in and help you at a time to suit you, and don't forget to keep an eye out for the next Fat Skeleton Warehouse Clearance event early in May 2026!"

To be in with a chance of winning, shoot an email* to **fatskeletonuk@googlemail.com** with BSH500 in the subject box, and they'll acknowledge your free entry, simple as that. The competition closes on the publication of issue 501 (4 Dec), and winners'll be notified within a week or so, so that you get your prizes in time for Christmas. What a pressie, eh!

GOOD LUCK!

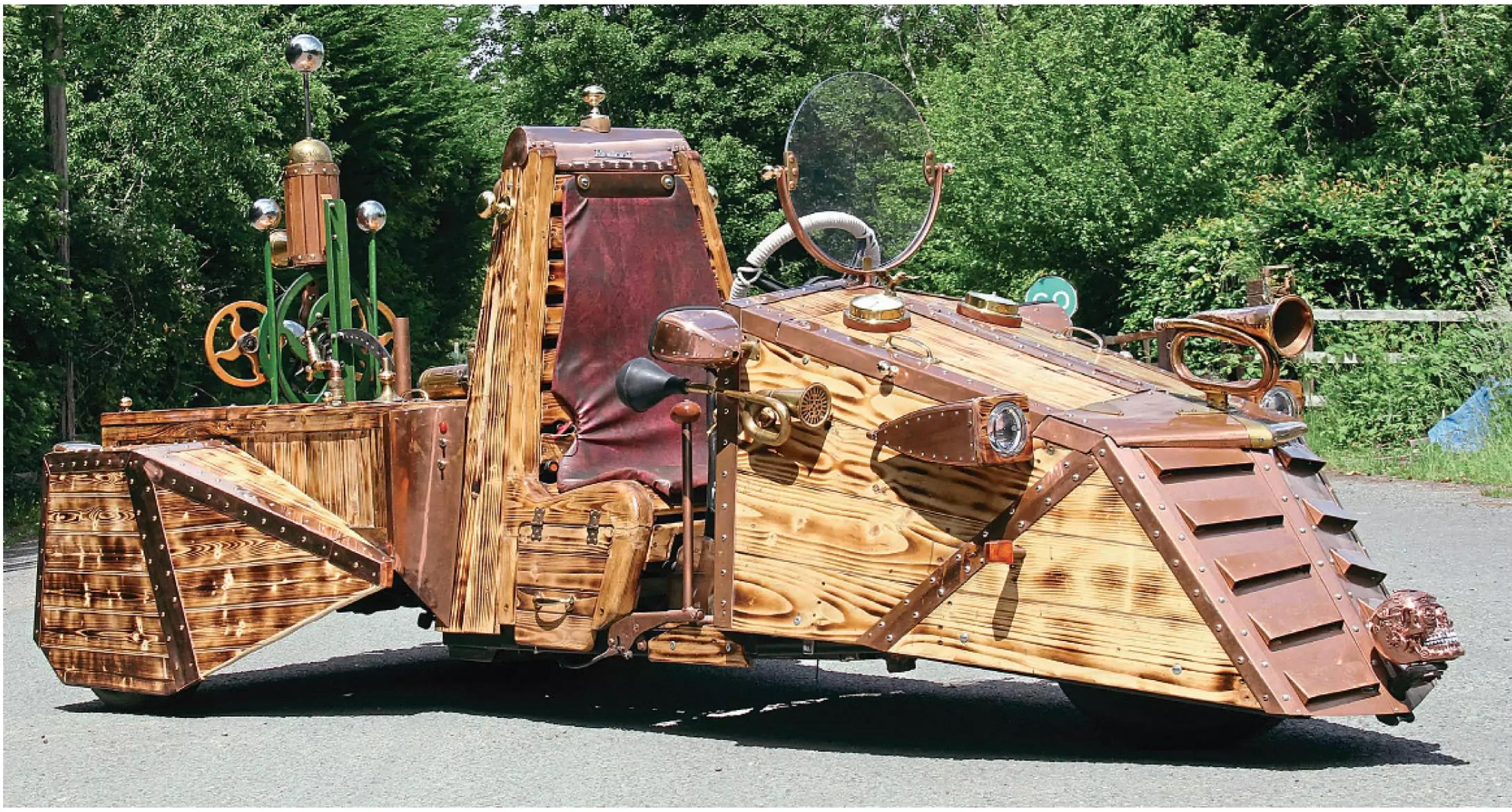
FAT SKELETON, UNIT E1, IMEX ENTERPRISE PARK, WIGWAM LANE, HUCKNALL, NOTTS (NG15 7SZ), TELEPHONE **0115 9635837**, WEBSITE **WWW.FAT-SKELETON.CO.UK**

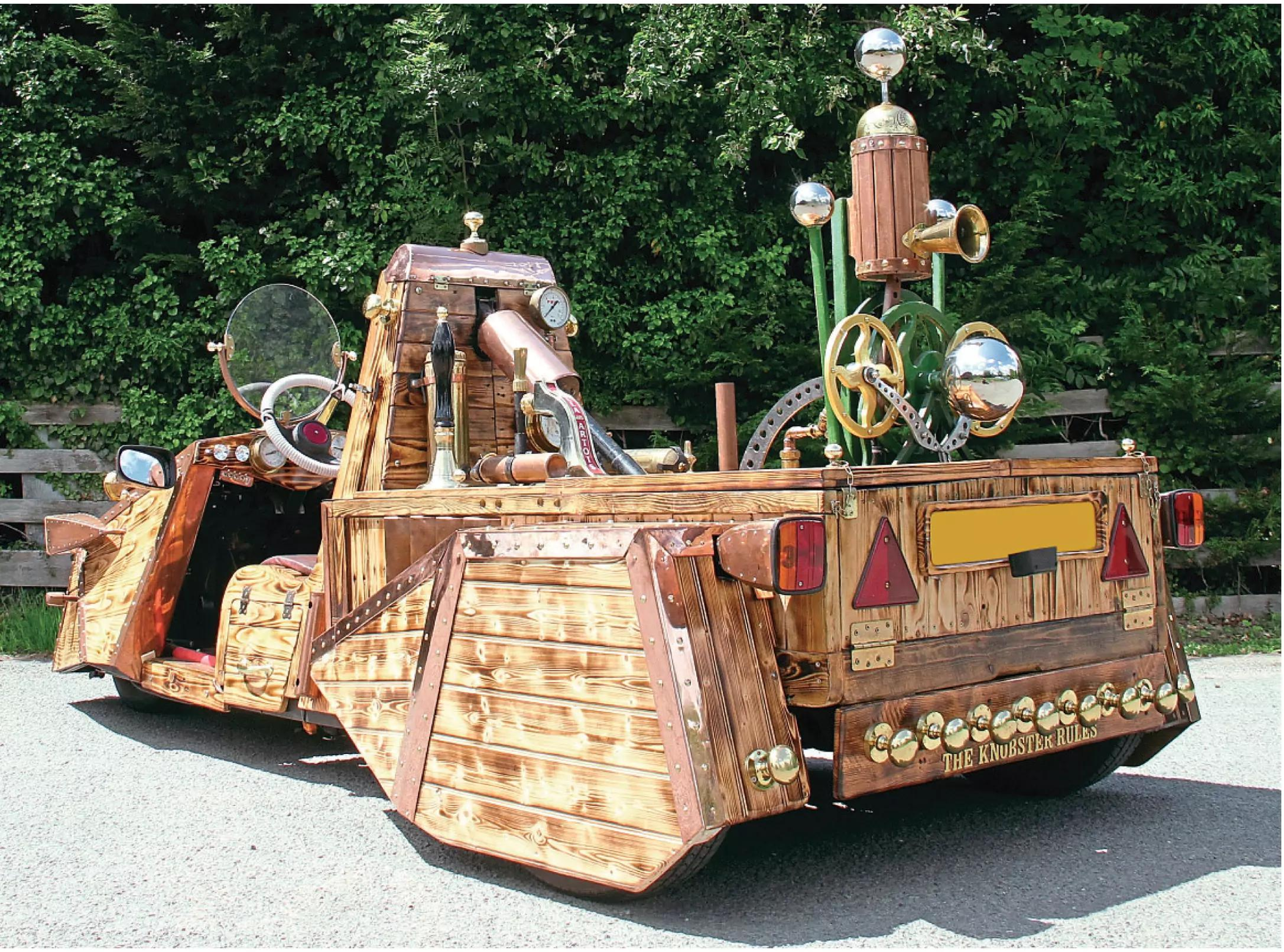
*They won't use or share your email for any other purpose than the BSH500 competition

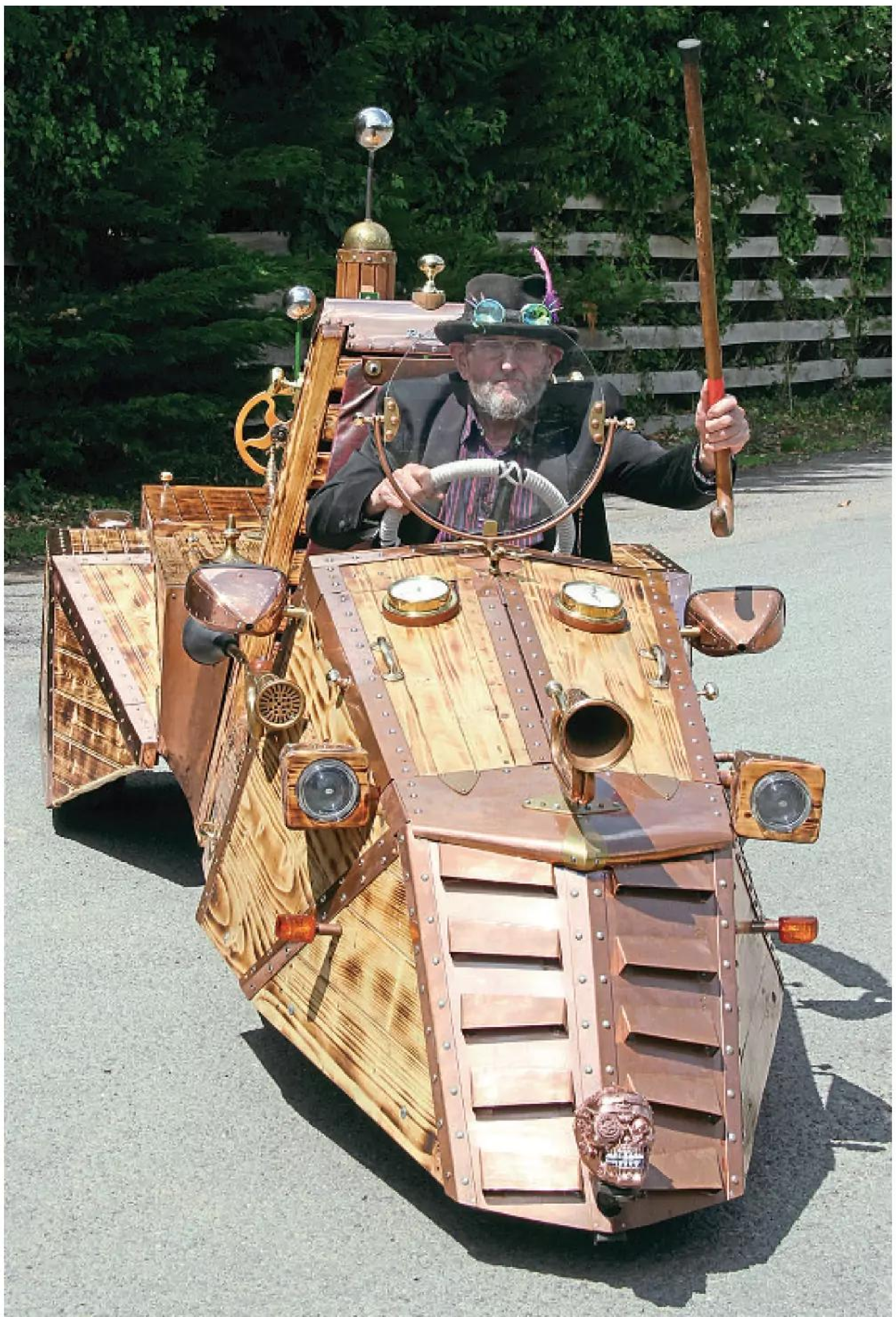
STEAMPUNK MOBILITY SCOOTER

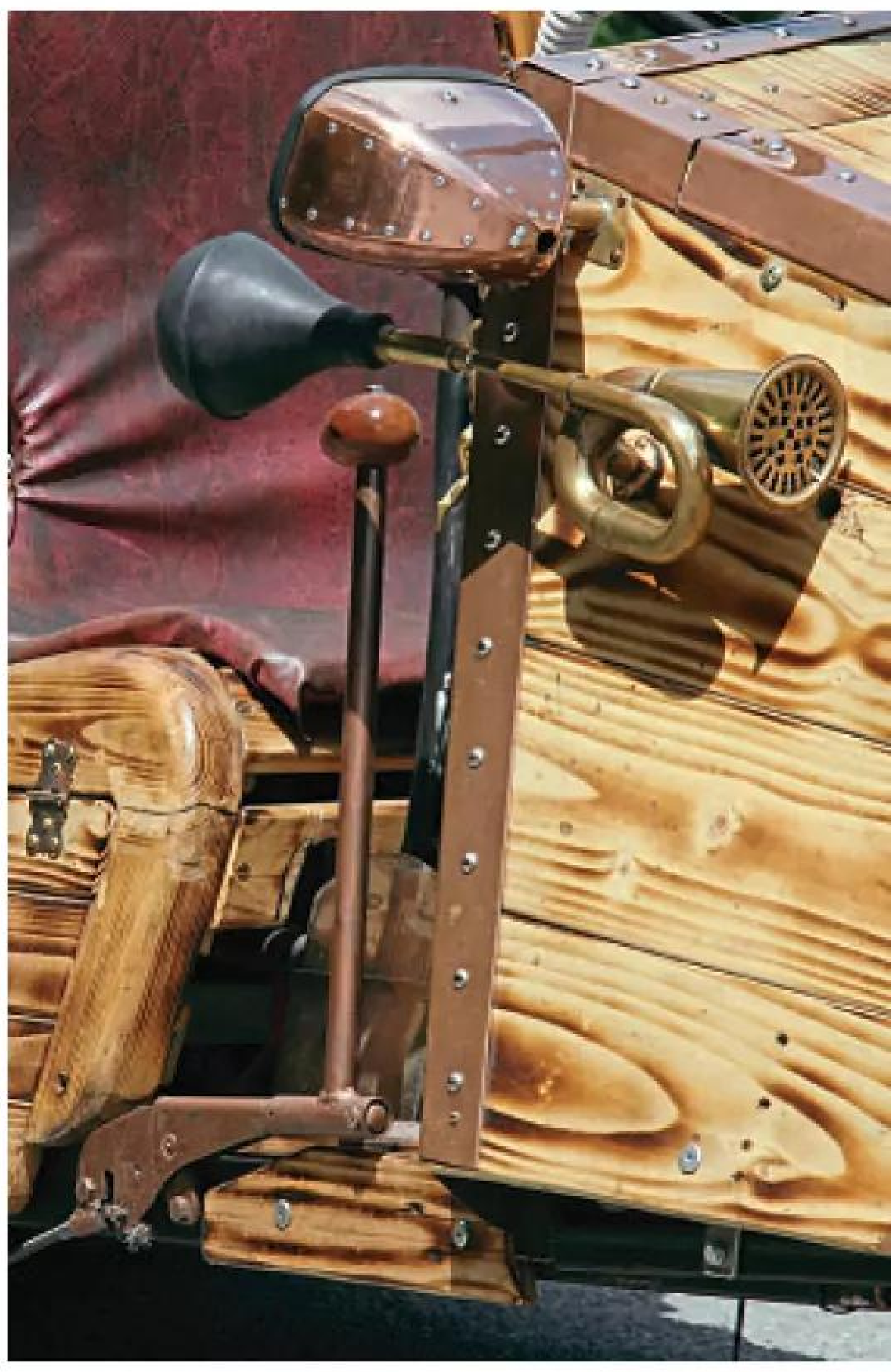
I WILL APOLOGISE PROFUSELY FOR STARTING THIS CELEBRATION OF GREAT BRITISH ECCENTRICITY ON A SLIGHTLY DEPRESSING NOTE BUT, AS THE BIKER, PARTICULARLY THE BIKE-BUILDING SIDE OF IT, COMMUNITY GETS OLDER AND MORE AND MORE OF US SLIP OFF THIS MORTAL COIL, THE COUNTRY, NAY THE WORLD, WILL BE THE SADDER FOR IT.

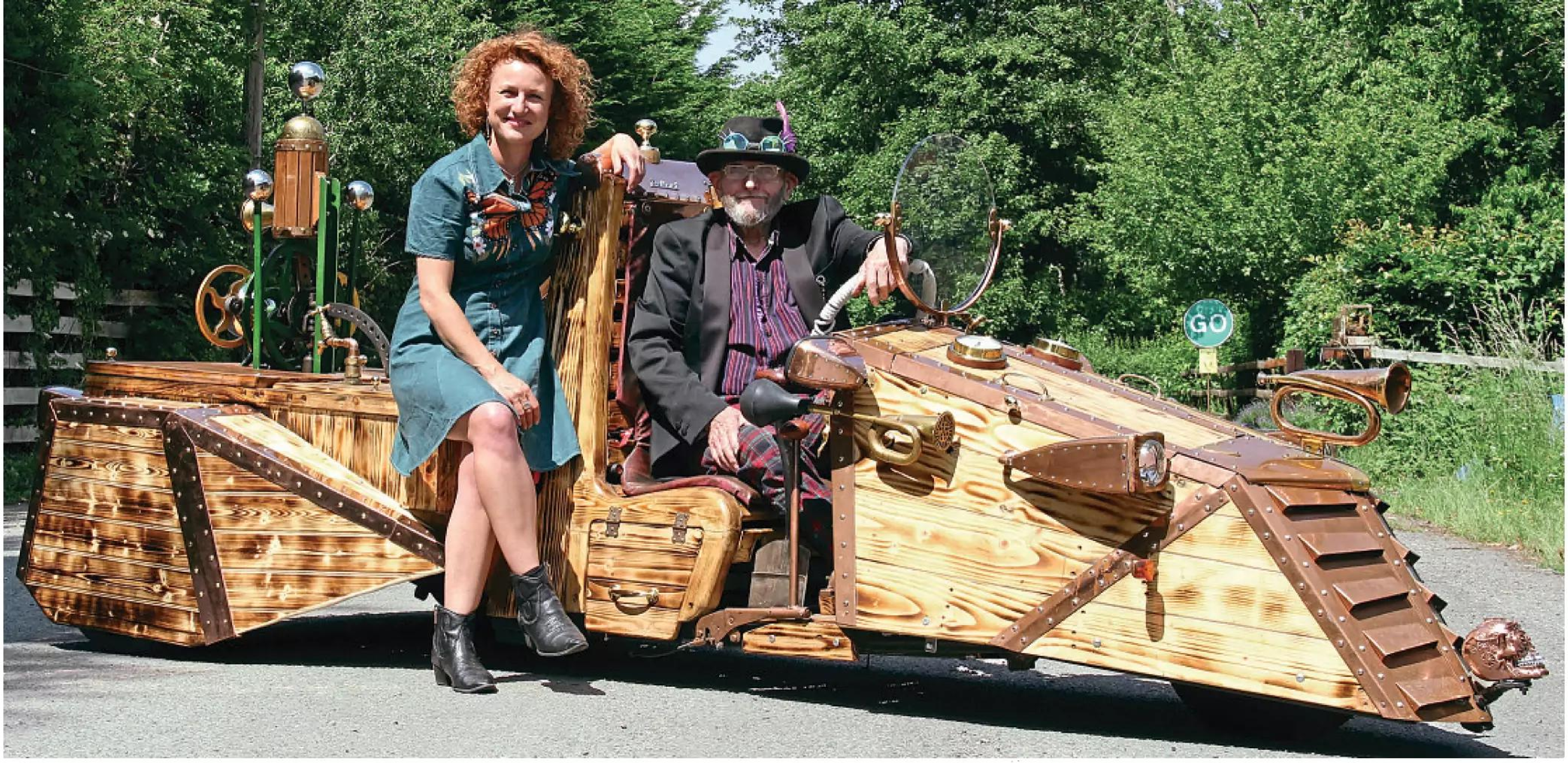
STELLA ARTOIS




THE KNOBSTER RULES







WE, as a nation, do do eccentricity, and vehicular eccentricity in particular, rather well. Just think back over the years of people like, for example, Chris 'Desperate Dan' Ireland; of Mark 'Sandy' Sanderson of the coal-driven steam bike we featured a couple of years ago; of the late Mick Fish's twin-fork Norton; of any of the amazing creations of YouTube favourite Colin Furze; of Mark Warrender's home-made two-and-a-half-litre single chopper; of Tim Oakley's literally handmade five-cylinder radial engine Virago… sorry, what's that? You haven't seen those last two? Oh, no, not yet you haven't but, boy, are you in for a treat!

Malcolm Green is no stranger to the pages of this mag, and a few others, too, as he's built some of the most eclectic three-wheeled vehicles to've ever caused an MoT inspector to chew the end of his pen. Most of them've been built around, or using components from, the products of a certain factory in Tamworth in Staffs; Mr. T. L. Williams and his colleague Mr. E. S. Thompson's Reliant Motor Company. He (Malcolm, not Mr. T. L. Williams or Mr. E. S. Thompson) used various Robin, Super Robin, and other model parts to create, amongst others, trikes (in that they had three wheels) that looked like an SR-71 Blackbird reconnaissance plane, and a chrome-plated Batmobile. (He has built other, more normal, three-, and two-, wheeled vehicles, too, but we're not here to talk about them, are we?) He has a rather impressive professional background, too, training first as a goldsmith in Birmingham before moving to Shadow Racing Cars in Northampton which was, at the time, the highest funded Formula One operation in the country. He stayed with them when they became Arrows Grand Prix International and, when they closed, spent twelve years with Benneton so, you could say, there isn't much he doesn't know about building, and detailing, purpose-created vehicles.

Since retiring from the F1 world, he's lived quietly at home in the Midlands, handcrafting his own creations in his shed, and making the amazing working sculptures that adorn his house's front garden – he only gave the street name of where he lived, not the house number, saying: "I think you'll work out where I live…" He was right, too – the moment I turned into the road and saw a particular house, I knew it was in the right place.

How did this one come to be then, Malcolm? "Well, old age (I'm 77) can take its toll on your abilities to create and build in the shed, and I asked myself, 'Should I pull down the shutters or embark on one last huzzah?' An unexpected and unwelcome visit from the Grim Reaper put everything on hold in 2021, but I squared up to the exceptionally skinny bloke with the scythe and told him to come back in a few years, as I had a new trike itch that just had to be scratched. Fortunately, he got tired of waiting and moved on, but left me somewhat limited in the scope of my abilities, and so my design ideas evolved into a more practical approach – the 'Steampunk Mobility Scooter' was born, and off we went.

"Bloxham Steam Fair, more than any other, has been a constant source of inspiration, and a reason to take up the tools and have one more go. This trike project began life in my mind five or six years ago, having accumulated a quantity of Reliant spares from previous efforts. I'm a big fan of recycling, and various visits to local centres always yielded a good supply of wood, metal, and bits of machinery – many a happy hour's been spent in my Woodford Halse shed, using a few rudimentary tools and some lucky auto-jumble finds, and the planned trike soon evolved into a pick-up that could also hold my (mobility) scooter.

"The material I've used most for this vehicle has been that of wooden pallets (twelve in total), which needed an awful lot of fettling (smoothing, sanding, filling), finished off in a charred effect created with a garden weed-burner. I also used three old copper hot-water cylinders (one from my own heating system!) that I cut with an angle-grinder (and a lot of discs!), flattened, panel-beat, sanded, sand-soldered (to keep an even heat and prevent distortion) together, riveted for strength and for the look, and polished to a high shine.

"Reliant Robins have always been a favourite of mine for trike builds, and this is the second one to come out of my shed. The engine, gearbox, front suspension, brakes, and steering are all from a low-mileage 850cc Super Robin, which came to me way back when every part was easily bought, and just needed fresh oils and seals to bring it back to life.

"The weird and wonderful accoutrements adorning the bodywork've given me much joy and many a happy hour trying to decide where best to attach them; from the copper bugle on the bonnet, to the beer pump and Victorian footwarmer in the back, there's something for all occasions! The last part of the build came to me in a flash of inspiration as the Bloxham Steam Fair approached – I asked myself, why not add a steam engine to the rear? Not a real one, of course, just a facsimile, so after some thought and using the old Reliant heater motor, plenty more recycled bits and bobs, cranks, pistons, and wheels, I've effected a doffing of my cap to all those wonderful engineers and soot-covered inventors from the age of steam, whom I was honoured to be amongst for this year's festival."

I can genuinely say that I haven't enjoyed photographing a BSH feature this year quite as much as I enjoyed the day with Malcolm and Maddy, his daughter – thank you, both, for getting in touch!

NIK

SPEC:
Reliant Super Robin 850 engine/gearbox/differential/axle/brakes/suspension/chassis (modified)/loom (modified), bodywork made from recycled wooden pallets/copper hot water cylinders, accessories include copper bugle mascot, brass horn, Victorian foot-warmer, brass fire extinguisher, beer pump, plumbing taps, barometers, dials, recycled tubing, wooden wheels, gazing balls, bathroom mirror fittings, etc., one-off leather seat

FINISH:
Scorched effect done with garden weed-burner by owner, polished copper by owner

ENGINEERING:
Trike built & all work by owner

THANKS TO:
"Smiths of Bloxham for the scrap metal; Island Commercials; Screwfix; & Maddy & all my family for all the tea/coffee/cake and, of course, cheese…"

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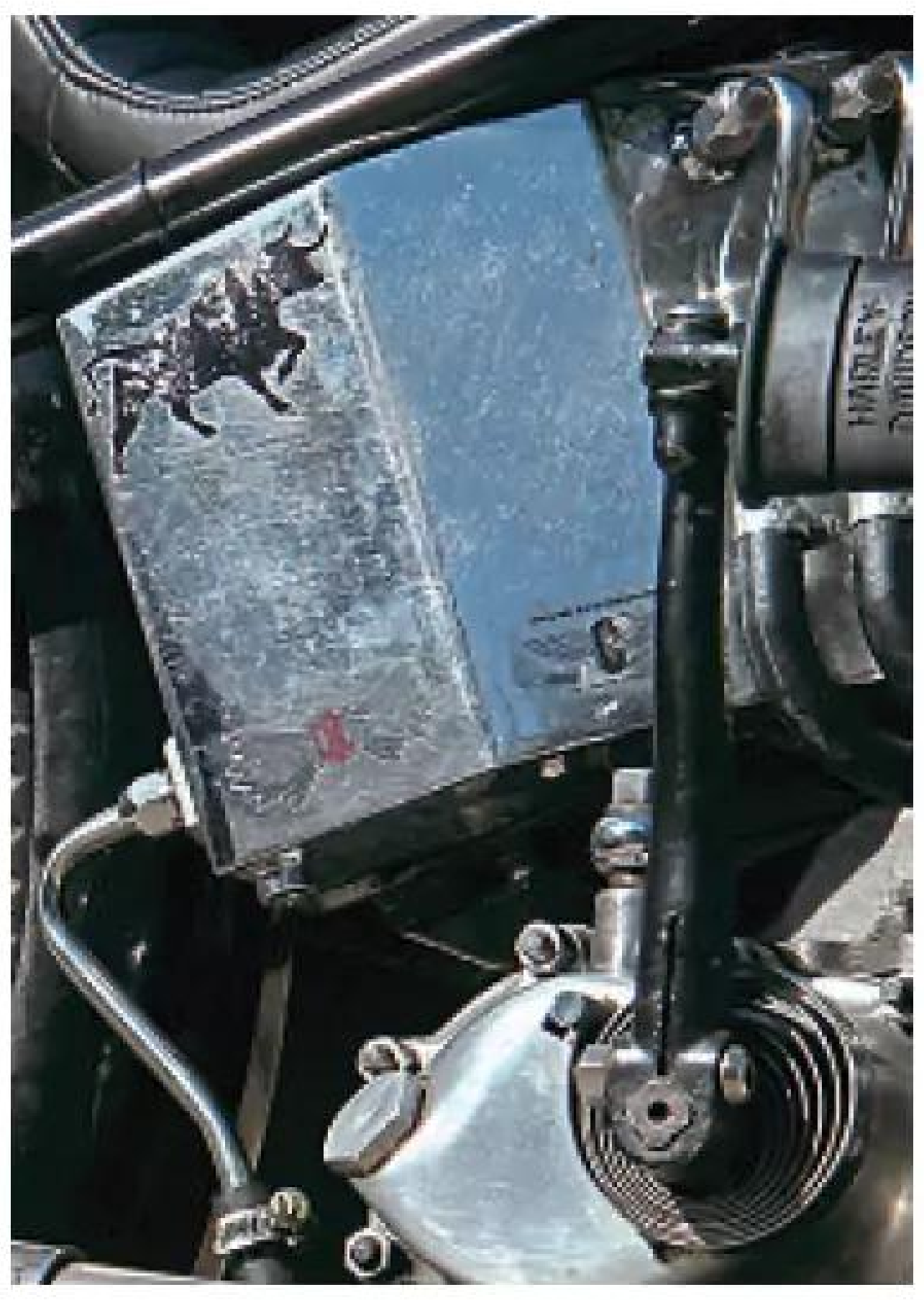
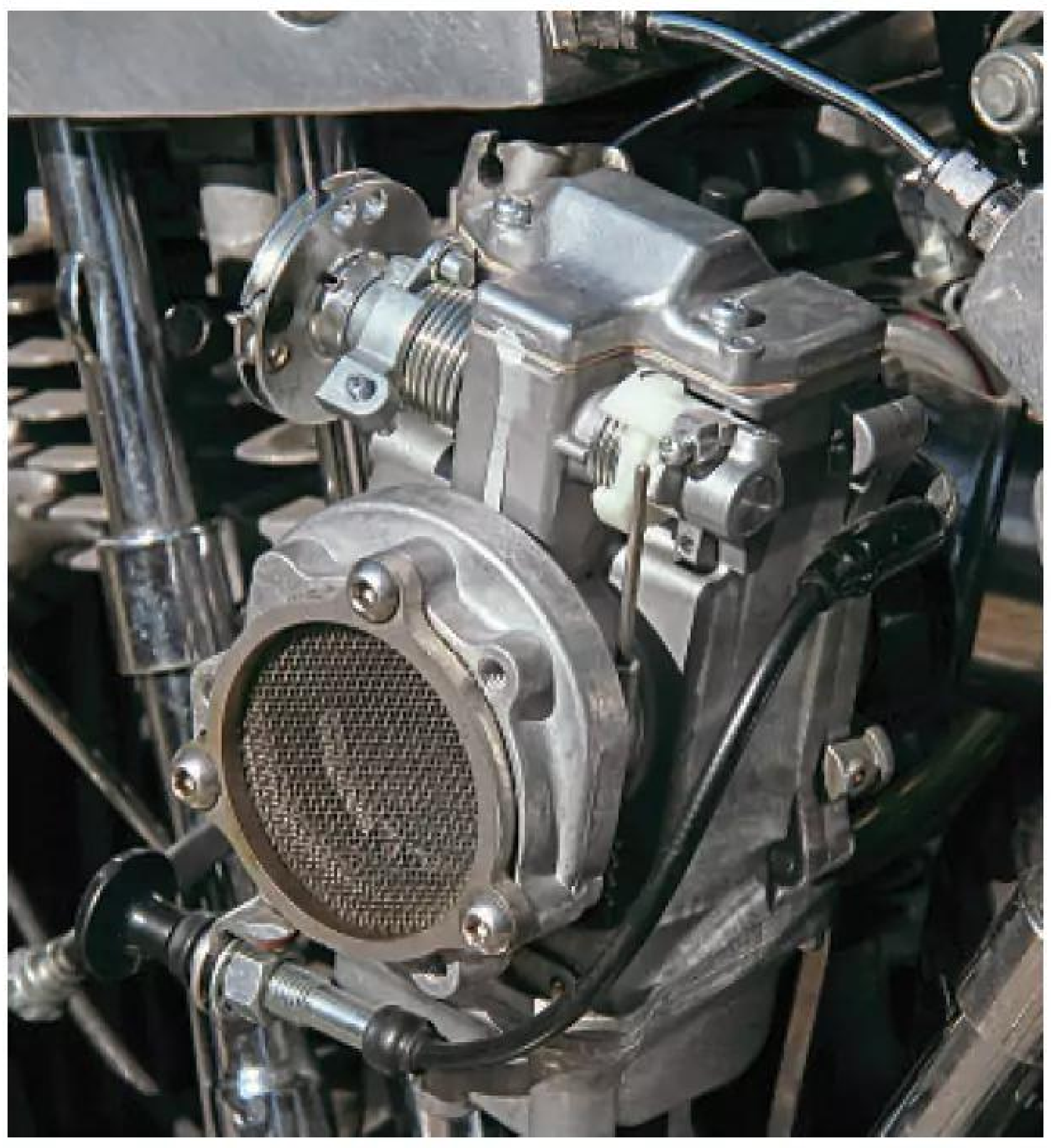
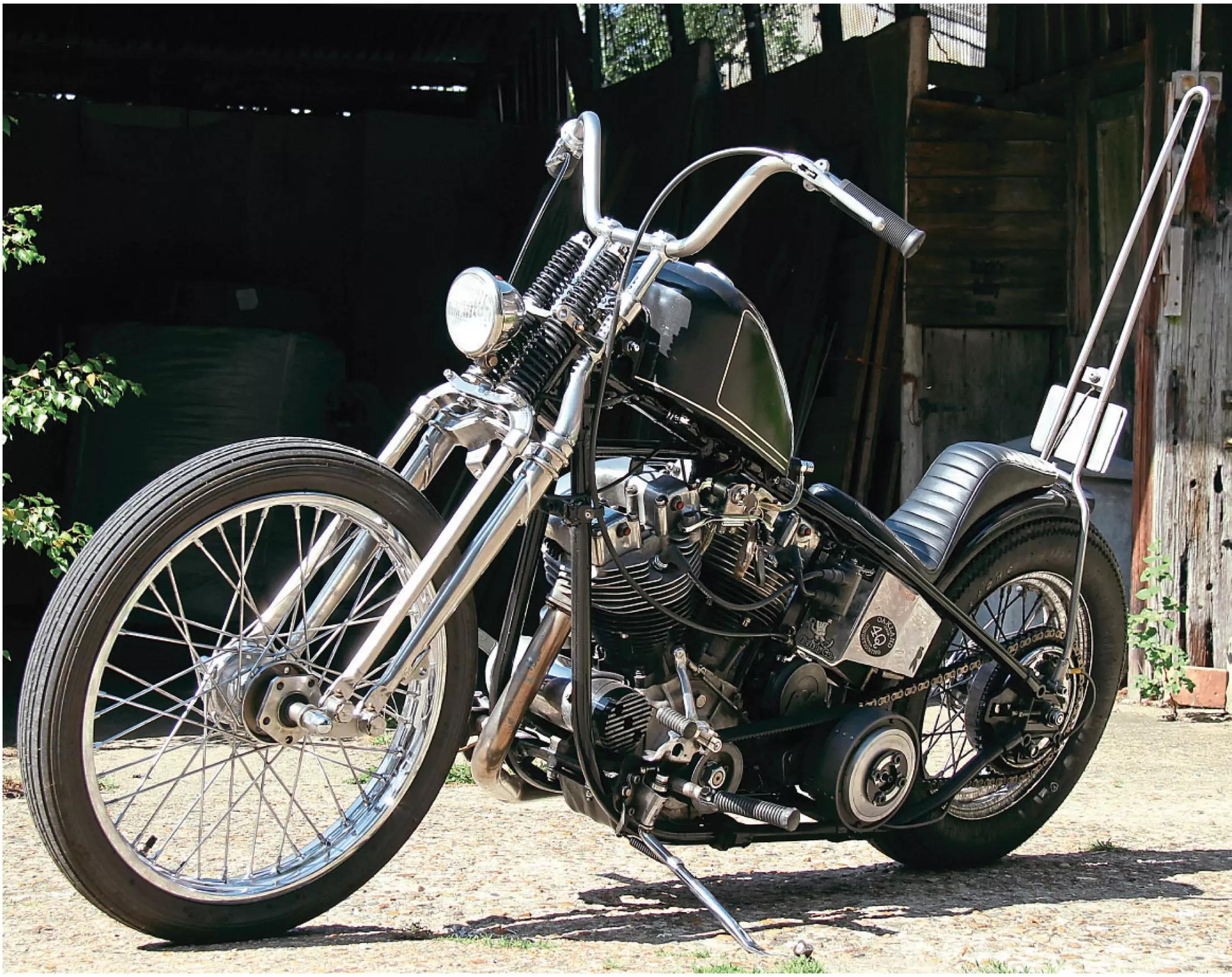
AVON SPEEDMASTER MKII
WAGNER LOCKHEED

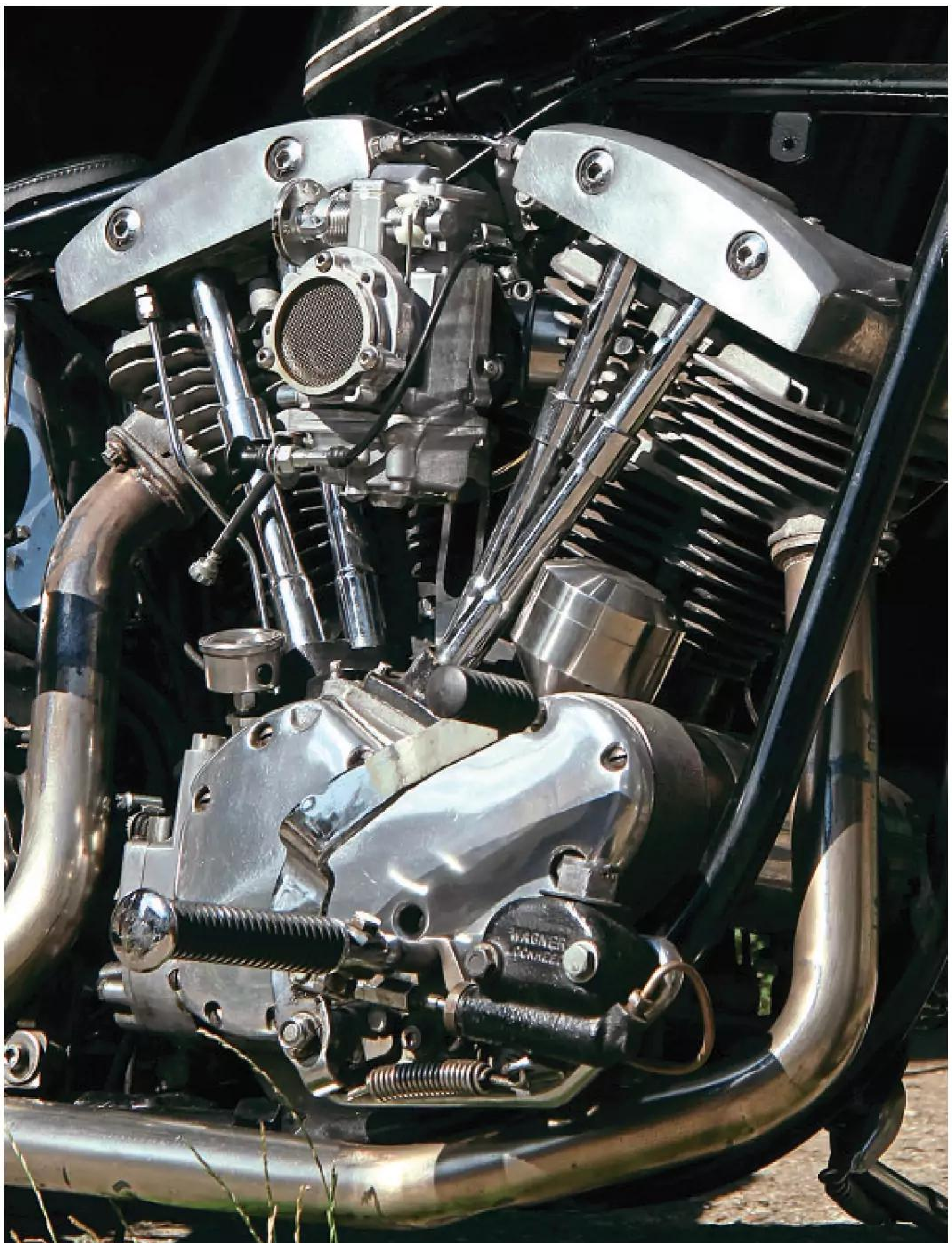
JENNY DUN GOOD...

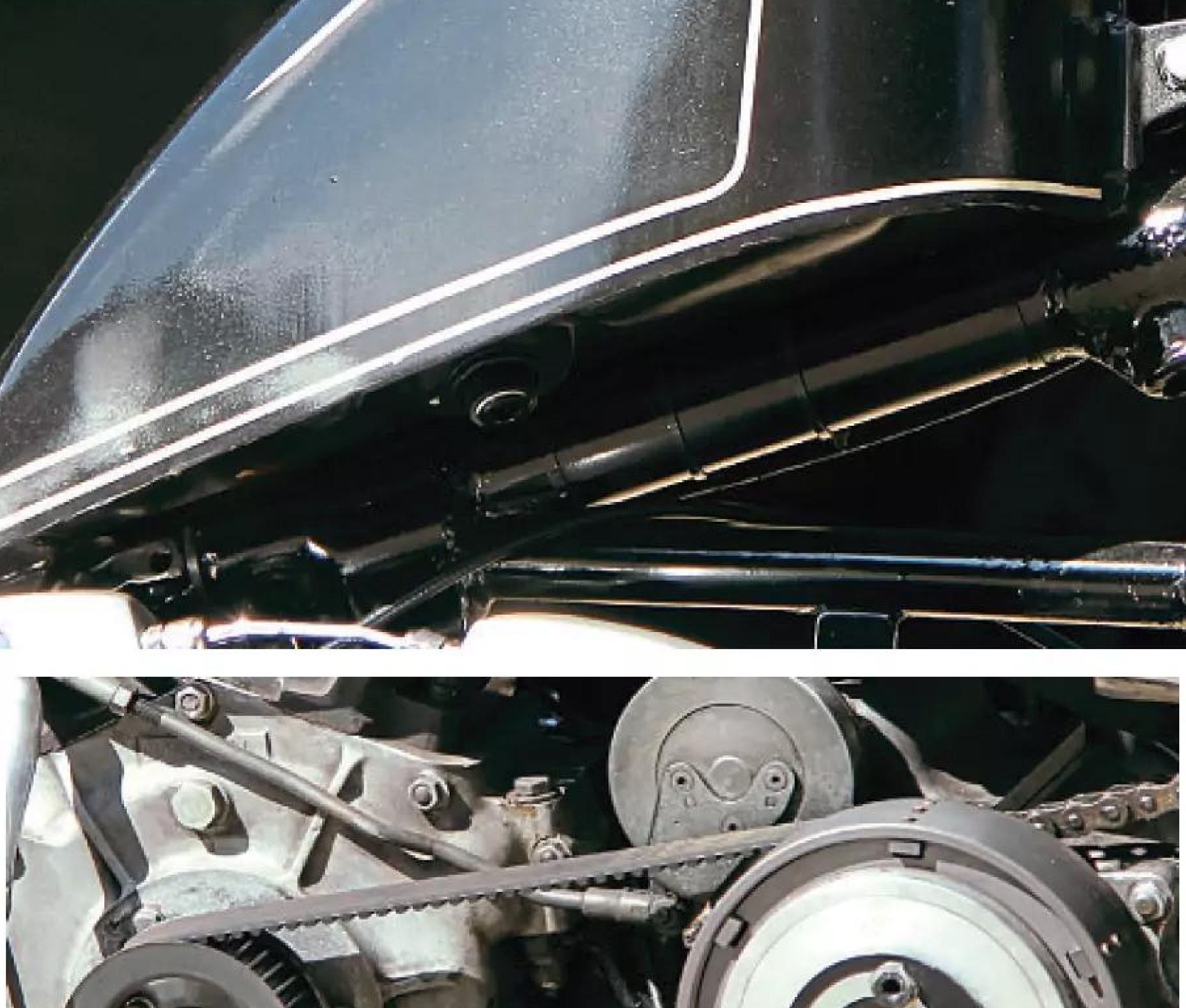
YEAH, I KNOW THAT, TECHNICALLY, THE TITLE OF THIS ARTICLE SHOULD BE 'GENNY DUN GOOD', BUT PEOPLE CALLED GENERATOR SHOVELS 'JENNYS', WITH A J, NOT 'GENNYS' WITH A G, DON'T THEY, SO…

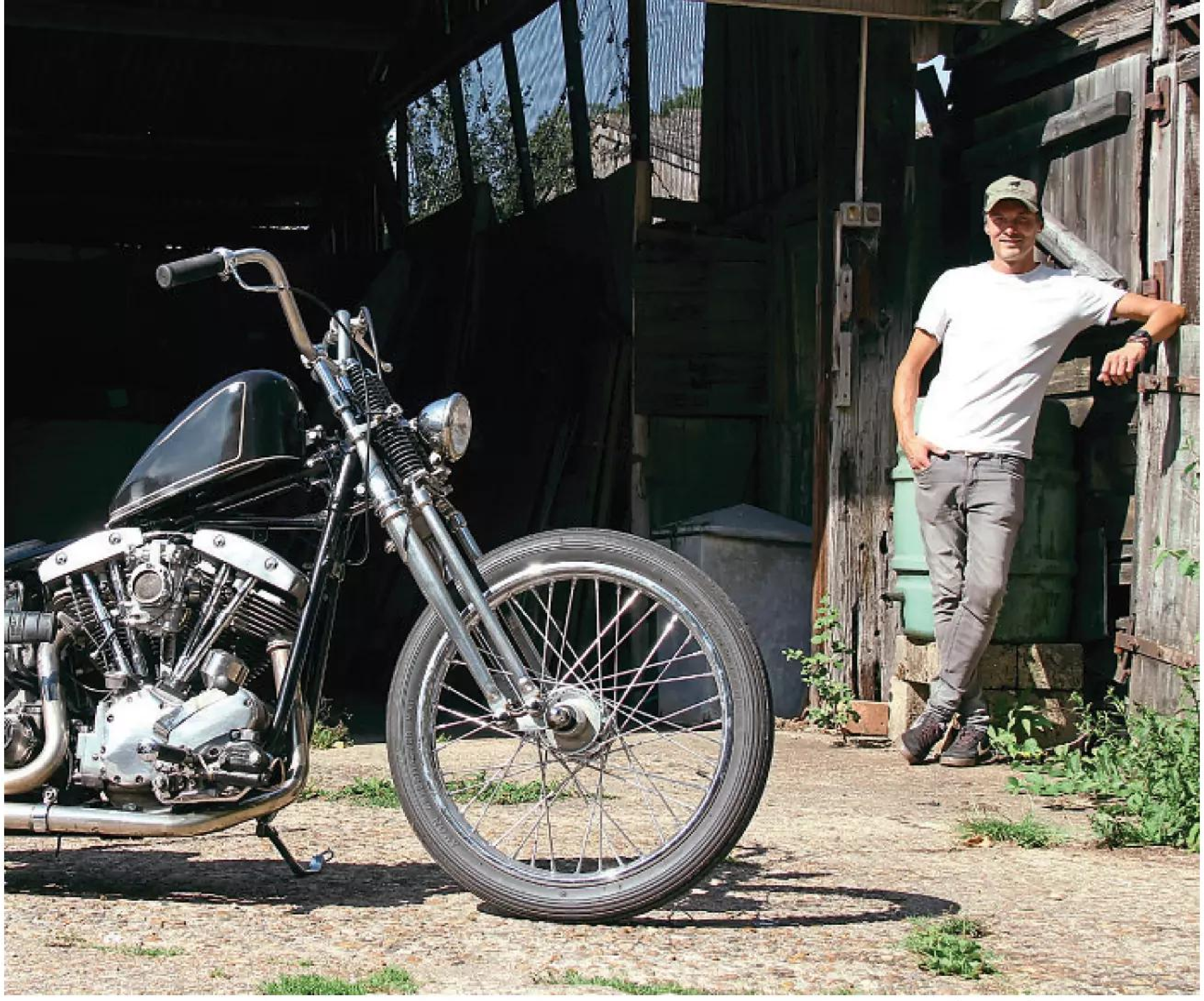












The motorcycle you see here, Dan's 1966 (the first year of the Generator Shovel) FLH 74-cubic inch (1200cc) Genny chop, was built out of a rather lovely, nearly stock, example that was bought by his good friend Chris Brown – a bike that was so pretty as it was that it's amazing that the classic Shovelhead lot haven't declared a fatwa on him. I don't know how many of you out there are as anoraky about the history of the Shovel as some I've met over the years but, basically, the Genny is the rarer of the two Shovelhead incarnations – it was the first version of the Shovelhead engine, built from 1966 to 1969, and had a generator instead of an alternator. Then, in 1970, The Mo Co replaced the generator with an alternator and redesigned the RHS engine case to have a cone shape, creating the Cone Shovelhead, which lasted until the series was replaced by the Evo(lution) in 1984. Did you know that? No? Nor did I actually – every day's a school day, eh?

As I said, he bought the bike that was to become this bike from Chris who, as I've said before, is something of a legend in East Anglian old Harley and Brit circles. He bought it in 2017 and, as he does, sorted out any problems it may've had and made it run as a sorted Shovel should. Dan, who was building an Ironhead (featured in BSH), saw it at some point and began to badger Chris into selling it to him. After a while he (Chris) gave in, and sold it to him (Dan) in about 2021 and, all these years later, Dan says Chris thought he was mad cutting it up to build a chop out of it.

Of course, he didn't do it straightaway. No, he rode it around a bit as he sourced and collected parts for the bike he had in his head – an olde-skool vintage-style chopper; hardtail, sissy-bar, Sporty tank, springers, no front brake. That meant that, of the whole bike, he was really only going to use the engine and the frame – the rest of it'd be sold off to recoup some of what he was going to be spending fairly shortly.

Speaking of the engine, the one in the bike's pretty hot. When Chris wheeled it out of the container it arrived in from the States, it was already fitted with a set of dual-plugged heads, big-bore S&S 88-cube (1450cc) barrels, and a set of Velva Touch lifters, which Dan's been through and checked, and fitted new gaskets and seals, and reports that it all looks pretty good. Since he's had it, he's fitted a BDL belt-drive primary with a suitably in-keeping skinny belt, and a Riviera Pro clutch, which was all fairly straightforward, but getting a carb that worked just so's taken a little longer. In fact, he says he's had a few different ones on there, but eventually pumped for the Mikuni HSR42 that it now runs, especially since he found that Mikuni Australia (www.mikunioz.com) modifies them for Shovelheads by switching over and dropping the throttle assembly so it's not fouled by the rocker-to-rocker oil line ("I got stung for import duty of £130, mind!"), and that neat mesh air-inlet is a Larl's Shorty one and looks so right. The 'pipes were intended for a Pan, subtly modified to suit, and the four-speed ratchet-top 'box's been checked over and any parts found wanting replaced.

Moving to the frame, he bought a Krispy Choppers hardtail section from the States, and got Jay at Heron Cycles to cut the rear section of the '66 frame away and weld on the hardtail, and also to make a new and suitably towering stainless steel sissy-bar, too, while he was at it. Dan'd already scored a set of 20-inch Big Port springers (readily available US-made springers that won't break the bank) which, after he changed the springs from chrome to black, fitted right in to the design he had in mind. A Lowbrow 21-inch front wheel, sans front brake o'course, sits betwixt 'em, and they're topped with a set of Prism Supply eight-inch stainless 'bars held in 3.5-inch tall risers made by Razorback Moto Supply.

Moving backwards, there's a Rick Doss early -style Sportster tank, and a 'Loveseat' (oh, aye?) seat from another US company, Buttseats, that wraps neatly around the Lowbrow Stingray rear muddie. Below this sits a modified-to-fit Panhead horseshoe oil tank (I think we've mentioned previously that Panhead oil tanks work really well with Shovelhead hardtails?) with a Hawthorn Co Cycle battery box that, Dan says, "is really neat, and fits perfectly inside the horseshoe oil tank". The rear wheel's an original '66 'juice' drum brake wheel (that's 'hydraulically operated' to you and me), sourced by Chris as the bike, when he got it, had a disc rear brake, and aftermarket wheels, too. Finally, Dan himself did the satin black paint, with its cream striping on the tank, himself, and polished all the bits he wanted shiny, but not too shiny, y'know?

He's had the Shovel a few years now and says it's been constantly evolving the whole time. He's pretty happy with how it looks, and describes it as "an absolute blast to ride, definitely a keeper". He rides it all-year round, too, and can usually be found of a Friday afternoon down at The Bull in the Woods brewery, which's developed into a social gathering of like-minded folk on cool old bikes; "Great people, great builds, great beer." The bike also was accepted into the hallowed custom tent at this year's Trip Out, and ended up being one of the six winning bikes, garnering 'Judges' Choice'. It has turned out to be a really well-put-together machine (not really surprising given his Ironhead previous build) that rides well, looks right, and starts and runs as it should – as the title says, 'Jenny dun good'. I wonder if the classic Shovelhead lot've taken his name off the death list yet?

NIK

SPEC:

1966 H-D 74-cubic inch/1200cc FLH Generator Shovelhead engine (dual-plugged heads, S&S 88-cubic inch/1450cc pistons/barrels, Velva Touch lifters, Mikuni HSR42 carb with Mikunioz.com modified throttle assembly, Larl Shorty's mesh air inlet, Riviera Primo Pro clutch, BDL 1.5-inch open belt primary, 4-speed ratchet-top gearbox, points ignition, modified Panhead drag pipes)/frame (hardtailed with Krispy Choppers hardtail)/16-inch 'juice brake' rear wheel/forwards (modified), Avon Speedmaster 21-inch front tyre, Lowbrow 2.5-inch 21-inch front wheel, Big Port 20-inch springers (springs changed to black), Prism Supply Co 8-inch stainless 'bars/Jack Hammer grips/Speedster rear light, Razorback Moto Supply 3.5-inch risers, Rick Doss Inc. 2.5-gallon early Sportster fuel tank, Buttseats satin black Loveseat seat, H-D Panhead horseshoe oil tank (modified), Hawthorn Co Cycle battery box, 4.75-inch Lowbrow Stingray rear mudguard (modified), one-off stainless sissy-bar, 16-inch rear wheel, original 'juice' drum brake, Firestone Champion Deluxe tyre, minimal loom, early Sportster headlight

FINISH:

Satin black with cream stripe by owner, polishing by owner

ENGINEERING:

Bike built by owner & friends, hardtail/sissy-bar by Jay at Heron Cycles, machined parts by Craig House

THANKS TO

"Jay at Heron Cycles (**07473 755955** or Facebook/Instagram); Craig House for machining; & the legend that is Chris Brown…"

WEBSITES:

www.larlshortys.bigcartel.com
www.hawthorncocycles.com
www.buttsseats.ca
www.prismmotorcycles.com
www.krispychoppers.com

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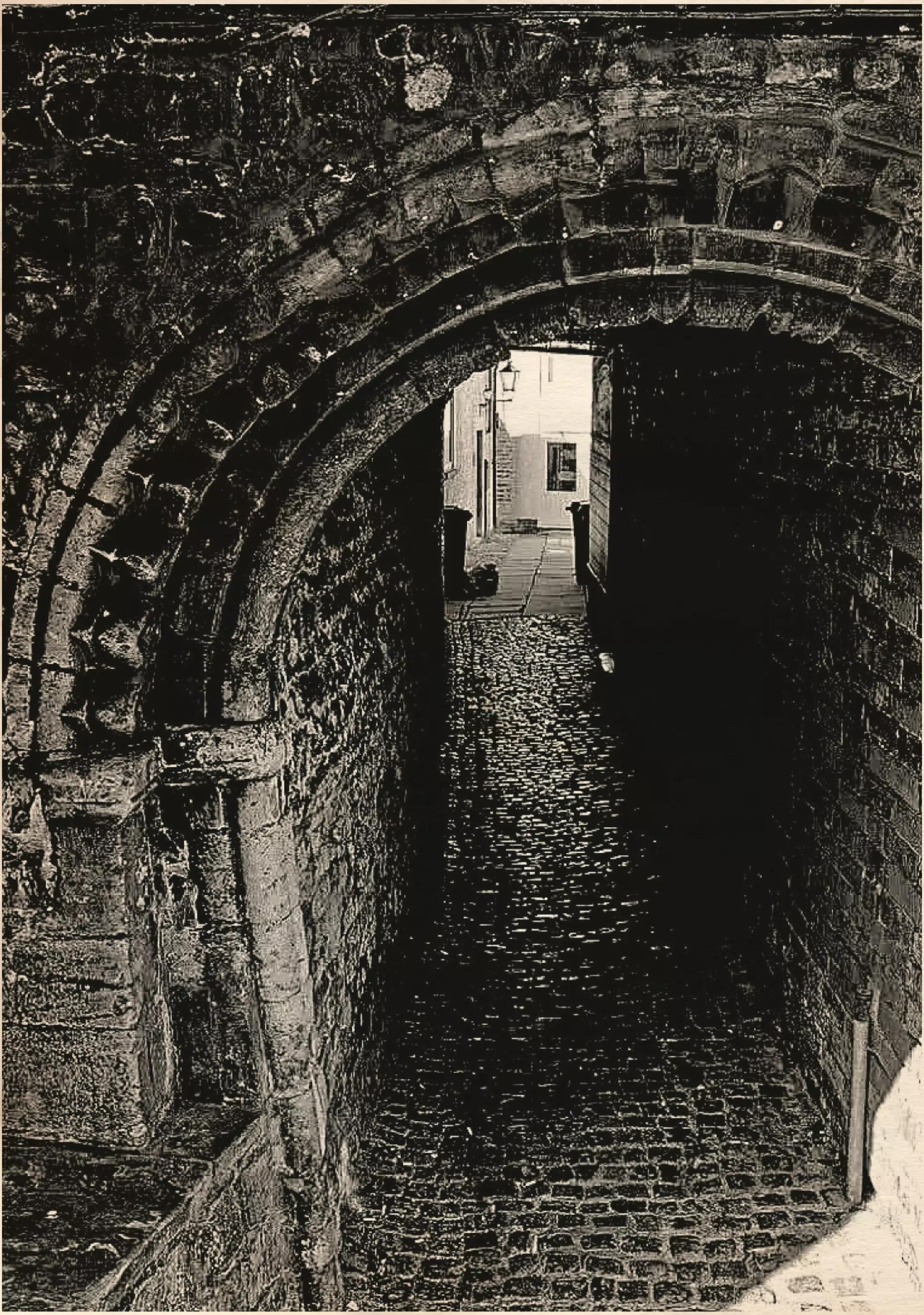


IN THE CITY, IN THE RAIN

IT WAS RAINING, BUT THEN IT ALWAYS RAINS IN THE CITY, AND WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN.

The old biker sat hunkered down in the worn, split saddle, one foot ankle-deep in a puddle and the other one on the footrest of the poorly motorcycle. "For f**k's sake," he cursed. He hadn't wanted to make this run, but he'd been cajoled by a so-called friend to do them a favour, and now here he was, in the traffic, in a place he hated, on someone else's bike. In the rain. In the city.

He waited a few more moments. "F**k it!" He swung his leg over the saddle, and into the gutter to join the first one in the black, oily water. "F**king f**k, f**king, sh*tting, b*ll*cks!"

'Okay, that'll do with the oaths and curses,' he thought, and looked around for some safe haven to park up and sort out the mess he was in. The traffic streamed past in a disinterested procession of grey and beige drivers trying to get home as fast as they could, and wagons, buses and taxis trying to stop them. The rainwater was trickling down his neck, just to add to his already dark mood. Between two shops there was an alleyway, one of those old ones that people walk past but hardly notice - the ones that smell of mould and urine from where the drunkards venture in to void their bladders, but along which no one goes far because they don't lead anywhere.

He wiped his face with the back of his gloved hand, heaved the bike up on to the pavement, and pushed it towards the gloomy shelter of blackened brick. The light within had a strange candle-like quality and, a few feet in, the stagnant air changed to something more fragrant - sort of spicy with an undertone of something else.

He heaved the ailing machine on to its stand and unwrapped his tool-roll. The tools had the soft sheen of being well-used, and their diversity was staggering; simple spanners and box-wrenches. in Metric and Imperial, rubbed shoulders with more esoteric tools like a Lucas mag-dyno adjusting tool, a Triumph clutch-puller, and others whose use was veiled. Squatting down, his hands ran over the various points of possible failure, and checked and prodded with a skill that comes from decades of practice.

Over his shoulder a bright light shone, and a gruff voice coughed out: "What have we here then?"

He glanced back, straight into what looked like a bicycle light held in the hand of dark figure silhouetted behind the lamp. "Broke down, obviously, and if you're going to stand there, maybe shine the light on what I'm doing, huh?"

"No need to take offence, sir," the voice said. "It's my duty to ask questions of strangers." He did, however, shine the light on to where the biker was working.

A fretted cable'd shorted where it'd been run behind a sharp-edged bracket, and a blown fuse'd resulted; an easy fix, but no spare fuse meant a bodged repair for now. The biker stood and groaned as his sore back cracked, and he shrugged the pain away. He turned, and the shadow was a copper.

He was wearing an old-style waterproof cape, and had mutton chops and a moustache. His helmet had an elaborate silver badge on the front, and the arm holding the lamp had a black and white cuff. "Weird," thought the biker, "Old Bill must still wear the old uniforms for tourists here in the city."

The policeman's eyes were lost in the shadow cast by his helmet, but his mouth turned up in smile and his moustache bristled. "Shall you give it a try then, sir? I've not seen a motor-bicycle like that one before?"

The biker obliged and, miracle of miracles, the ratty pile of junk sprang into life at a touch of the starter. The alley was just wide enough to turn around in with a bit of a shuffle, and the biker had his mount facing back in the direction of the street in a trice. The policeman stood stiff and rigid, as if on parade, and brought his hand up to his helmet. "Mind how you go, sir."

"Cheers," said the biker, and threaded the bike back down the dank passage and on to the street. The closer he got to the open end of the alley, the louder the traffic hum became until it was all-encompassing. "Weird," he thought, "it was like another world in there." He bumped the bike over the kerb, and prepared to do battle with the masses, and, as he waited for a gap to plunge into, he looked back over his shoulder at the entrance to the alleyway - the alleyway that wasn't there.

STEVE GAYTON

Event

101 RUN

I'M GUESSING THAT IF YOU'VE BEEN READING BSH FOR ANY TIME NOW, YOU'LL KNOW WHAT THE 101 RUN IS? LET'S PRETEND WE'RE ALL NEWBIES TO IT THOUGH, SHALL WE, AND I'LL EXPLAIN…

LOWLIFE
139
EAGLE
LOWLIFE
stop

JOE KING SPEED SHOP
HARLEY-DAVIDSON
75

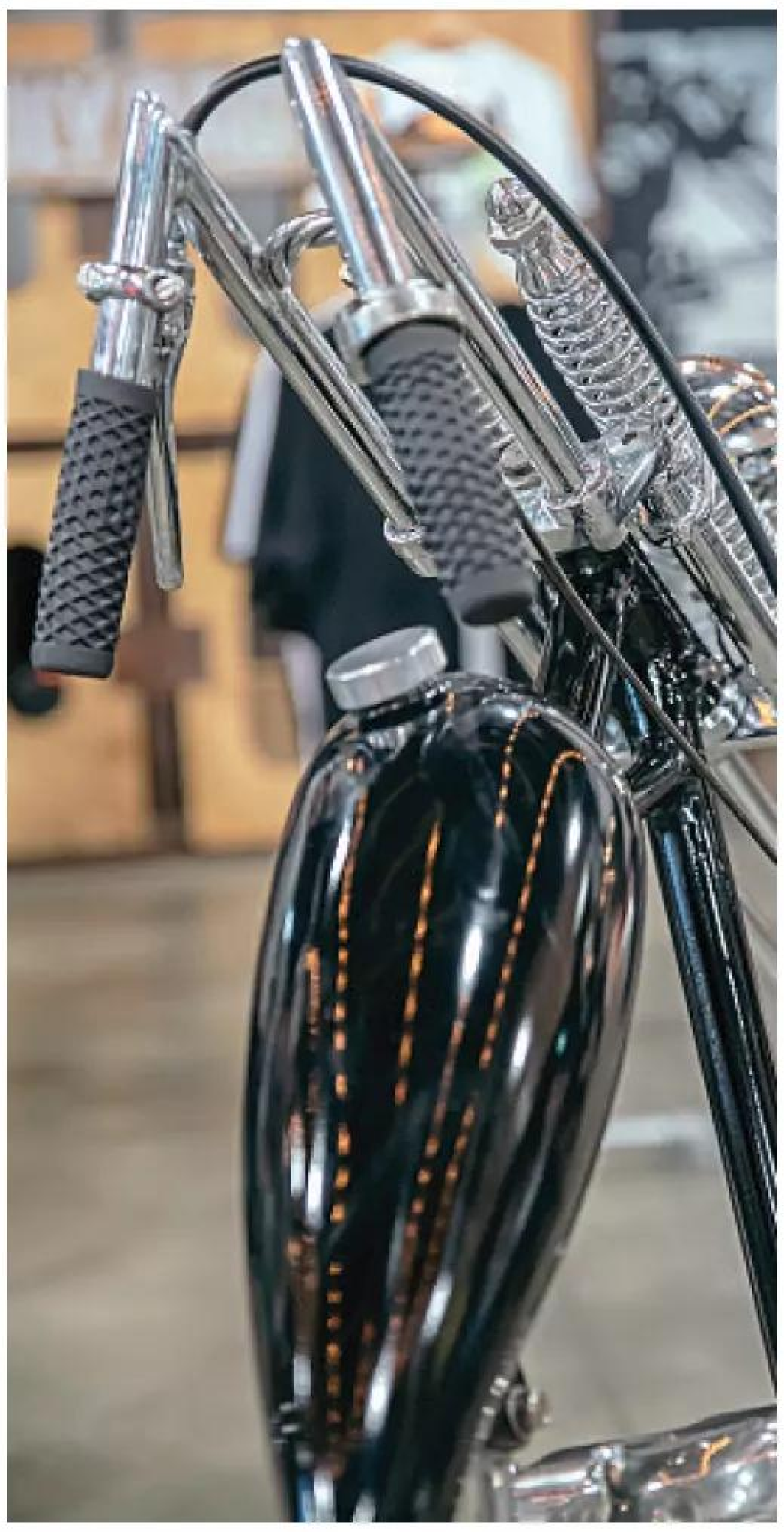
WHATEVER

The 101 is a four-day custom and vintage chopper festival held in July at Margate's iconic Dreamland amusement park which, for those four days, is transformed into what is probably the UK's premier hub for such motorcycles. It's organised by Scott 'Horsey' Walker and Dean Micetich, the guys behind Dice Magazine in the US, and this year celebrated five years of bespoke two-wheel artistry.

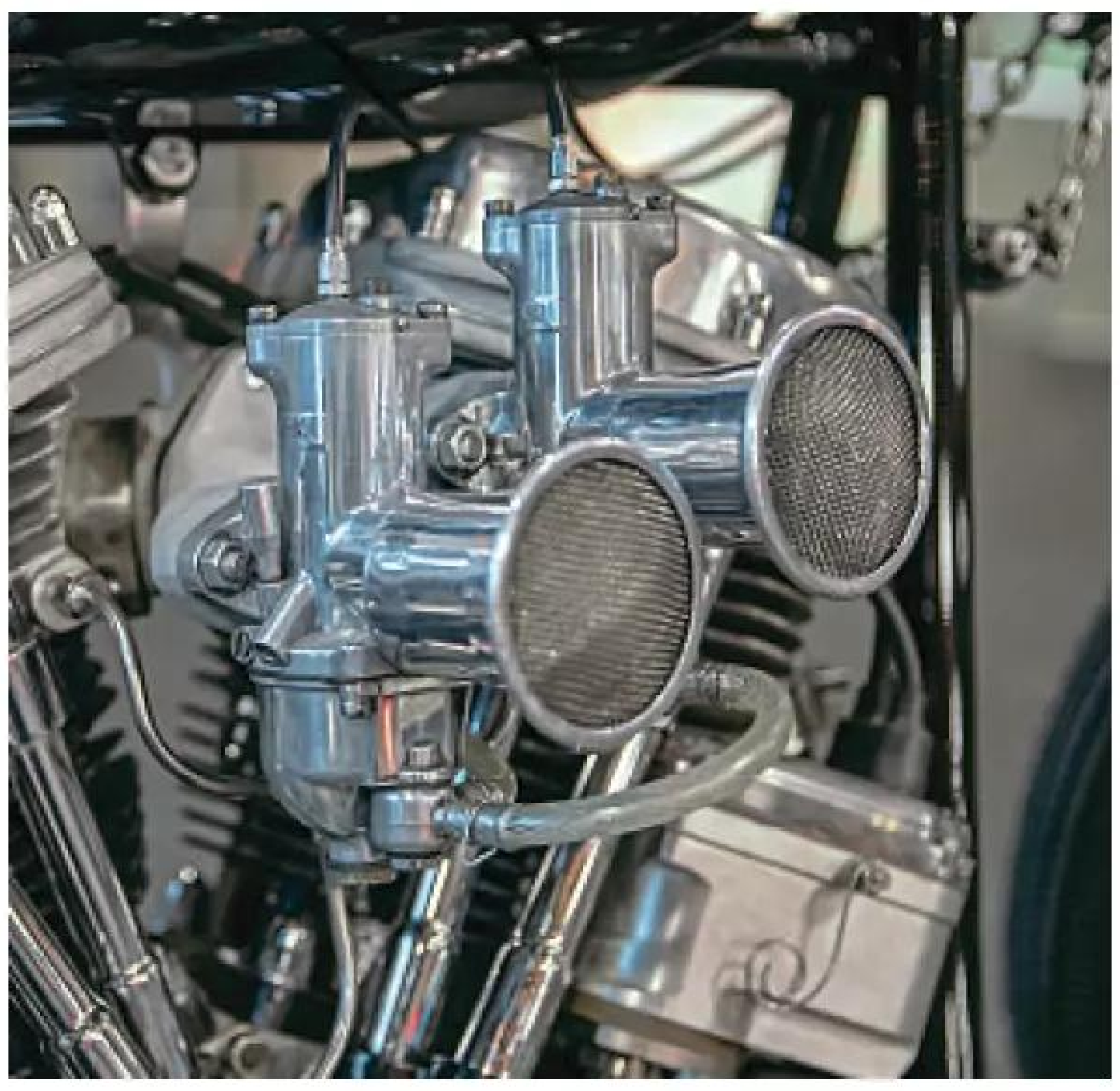
For me, and many others, the 101 isn't just about the show held at Dreamland itself on the Saturday, but about the whole four-day experience. I travelled 'cross the country on the Thursday so I could attend the kick-off gathering which, this year, was held at a new event space called Lowlife (very apt), and was a chance to catch up, chill, meet new people and, for me, get some photos.

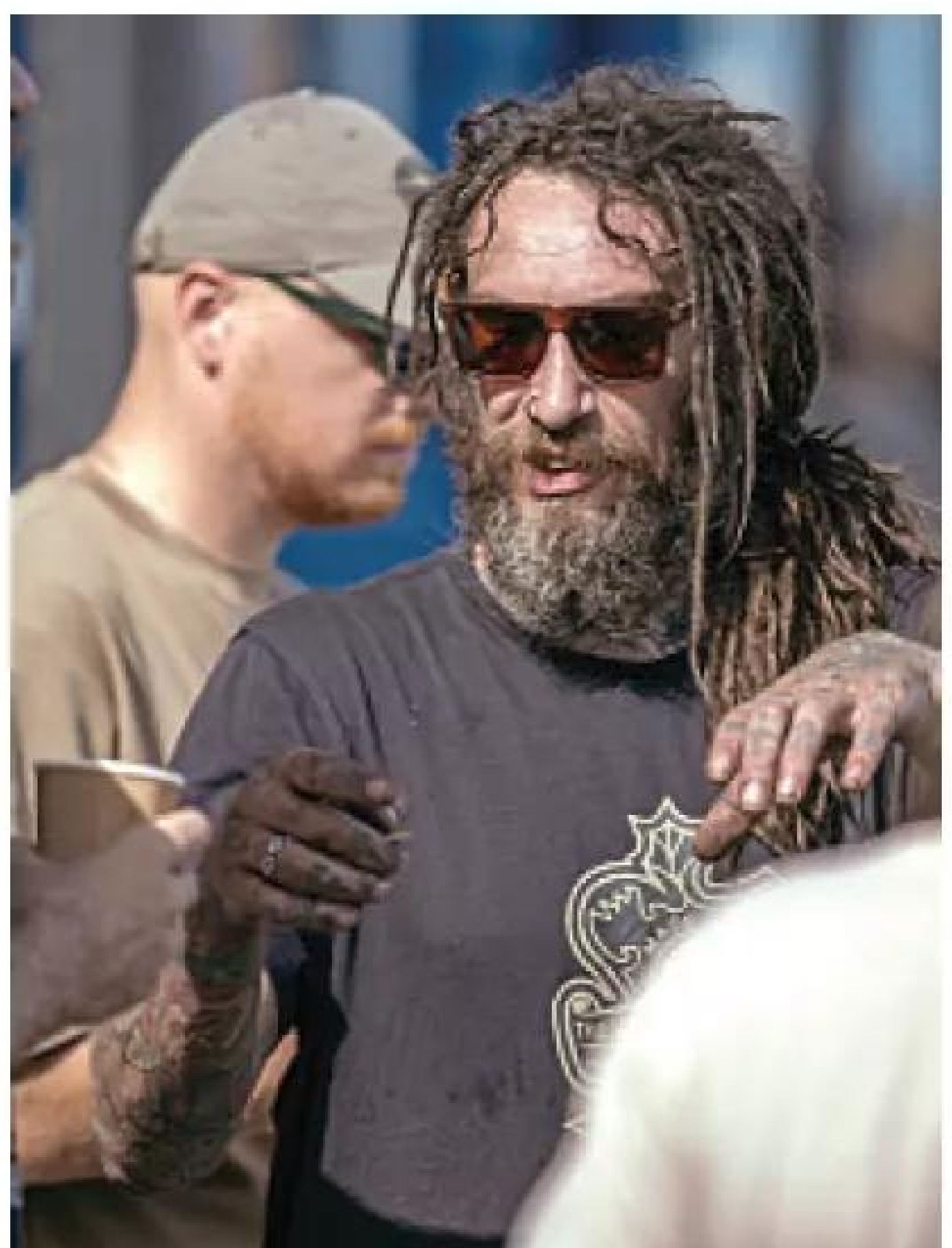
Then, Friday daytime, it was the now traditional 101 Ride-Out with almost everyone (almost) taking part. We gathered at The Albion Rooms by the seafront at around 9am, and it was kickstands up at 10am – early, but not too early, so as folk'd had a chance to recover from the hangover caused by the night before. The route we took heads back into Margate, past Dreamland, then loops round to take the scenic coastal roads for endless miles of chop-riding, ending going down a very (very!) steep and winding, and narrow, road to end up at The Coastguard pub in the tiny seaside village of St Margarets Bay, so near to France that mobile/cell phones switch to French networks. We were there a while, a good while, as it's a lovely place, and some took the opportunity to cool off in the sea (it was pretty hot and,

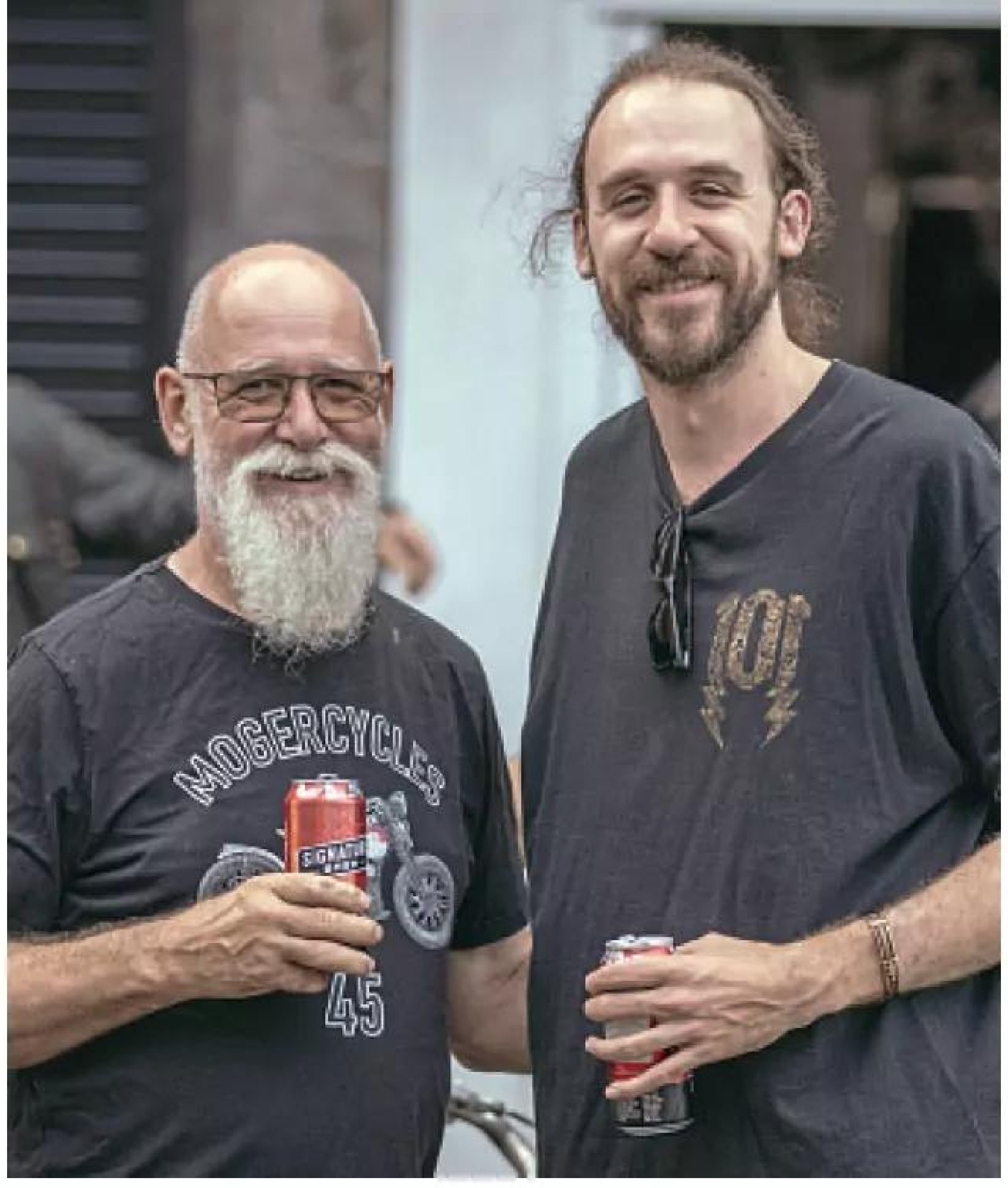
ENJOY YOUR LIFE



260 XWE
101 MARGATE







thankfully, the forecast of rain didn't materialise), while others just grabbed a beer at the foot of the white cliffs in the sunshine. Eventually, bikes peeled off in small groups to, either, explore this part of the world or head back to Margate and the Albion Rooms, or just do their own thing. That evening it didn't look quite as busy at the Albion Rooms as previous years but, I'm guessing, as there were groups of bikes parked all over Margate, a lot of people stayed within walking distance of their accommodation so more beer could be consumed.

Bright and early on the Saturday morning, Dreamland's 'Hall by the Sea' opened its doors to the crowds of people waiting. The show, the main show, ran from 10 in the morning to 6pm, and there were plenty of unique bikes on show, as well as trade stands, a bar, and a skate ramp outside. Bikes were displayed with plenty of room to get amongst them, and there was plenty to look at. Yes, the bikes were, in the main, in the vintage chopper style, but don't imagine that means there wasn't creativity aplenty. Likewise, the trade stands included artists like Paige Ripley who had a range of her artwork for sale, and independent bar set ups offered cold brews, and screening zones showcased moto-films and clips about custom culture. Outside, the skateboard ramp was busy and offered a chance to sit, chill, and watch the spills and tricks of those having a go… well, until that is it decided to rain in biblical proportions for about half-an-hour – everyone made a dash for cover, but it soon dried up and things then carried on as before.

The buzz about the show was as much about community as it was about craftsmanship. Friendships were forged

OWNER: Ack
MODEL: HONDA DAX CHOP

Live to Ride

OWNER - DEAN
MODEL - KNUCK
LAST WORDS - DIE
PEOPLES CHOICE
NO

over custom modifications and paint finishes, and the open floor layout encouraged mingling – young families enjoyed the spectacle with die-hard enthusiasts of all things custom bike. Unlike (some) other bike shows, the 101 prides itself on its inclusive energy; all ages are welcome (under-16s accompanied by an adult), and there were a group of wheelchair-bound visitors, one of whom was blind. They loved the sound of bikes, especially old Harleys and Brits, but because the bikes in the hall were all drained of fuel (for Health & Safety reasons) none could be started for them to hear. Scott, though, arranged for one of the outside bikes to be started, and this was rewarded with the biggest smile I've ever seen on their face. It only lasted maybe five or ten minutes, but obviously made their day, so well done to all involved.

Yes, the Saturday is the event's main draw, but it doesn't stop there. The rest of the weekend there were other activities – small group ride-outs; long evenings of shenanigans over seafood and pints in Margate's Old Town pubs. Small groups met up for breakfast, Sunday, some packing and heading for home, but some for the beach to spend a final day on the golden sands before setting off later. The 101 is, for many in this scene, the first one of the year; the relaunched Flanders Chopper Bash was the following weekend, which a lot of people at the 101 were planning to attend, and then The Hook Up Chopper Show and, finally, The Trip Out in September. Now, sadly, the year's over but I can't wait for it all to start all over again next.

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RIDEWORX, RG41

IN the heart of Wokingham, along Reading Road, a dynamic and ambitious motorcycling enterprise is carving its reputation: Rideworx, RG41, and Indian Motorcycle Reading united under one umbrella, yet each bringing something distinct to the table. Together, they exemplify what a modern, passionate motorcycle business can be: rooted in community, committed to quality, but always forward-looking.

Rideworx is not just a name, it's a promise. From its base at Unit 1, 125 Reading Road (RG41 1HD), Rideworx offers a broad portfolio: new and used motorcycles, servicing, parts, accessories, and a culture of rider care. Their stock spans from learner-legal 125cc bikes to high-performance machines, across brands such as Voge, Sym, Keeway, Morbidelli, Benda and more, as well as a huge range of quality used bikes!. What's more, each used bike is HPI checked and subjected to a 41-point inspection before handover – indicative of their commitment to transparency and quality.

The Indian Motorcycle Reading dealership has been integrated into this well-established base – giving Rideworx an elevated edge. As of January 2024, Rideworx became an official Indian Motorcycle dealer, offering full sales and aftersales for one of America's most storied motorcycle brands. That means customers can now explore the full IMC range – Cruiser, Bagger, Touring, Elite models, and the legendary Thunderstroke and PowerPlus engines – all under the same roof. The move is bold. It signals confidence that the local market can support premium cruiser and touring motorcycles, not just entry-level and mid-range machines.

Siezing an opportunity when the news of the local Harley-Davidson main dealer closing its doors broke, the director of Rideworx took the decision to push the business even further, Putting two of Americas most iconic brands under one roof, by handpicking several of the staff that were known in the area for their specialist skills and Harley-Davidson knowledge, the team now known as RG41 has been built, the independent Harley-Davidson specialists. Their motto: 'Same team, different address'. Carving their own path, RG41 is now the go-to for all things Harley and custom. Offering main dealer trained technicians and knowledge, coupled with the Rideworx promise and passion, this stand-alone team has given an alternative of where to take your Harley-Davidso. Whether it's routine servicing, MoT or full custom builds, RG41 can deliver.

Combined, the three brands aren't just about the bikes, it's about the people who ride them. The 'Bike Nights' and community events have become something of a local institution – a chance to share stories, compare builds, and celebrate everything two-wheeled. In a world of corporate service centres, they stand proudly independent, keeping the spirit of the open road alive in Wokingham.

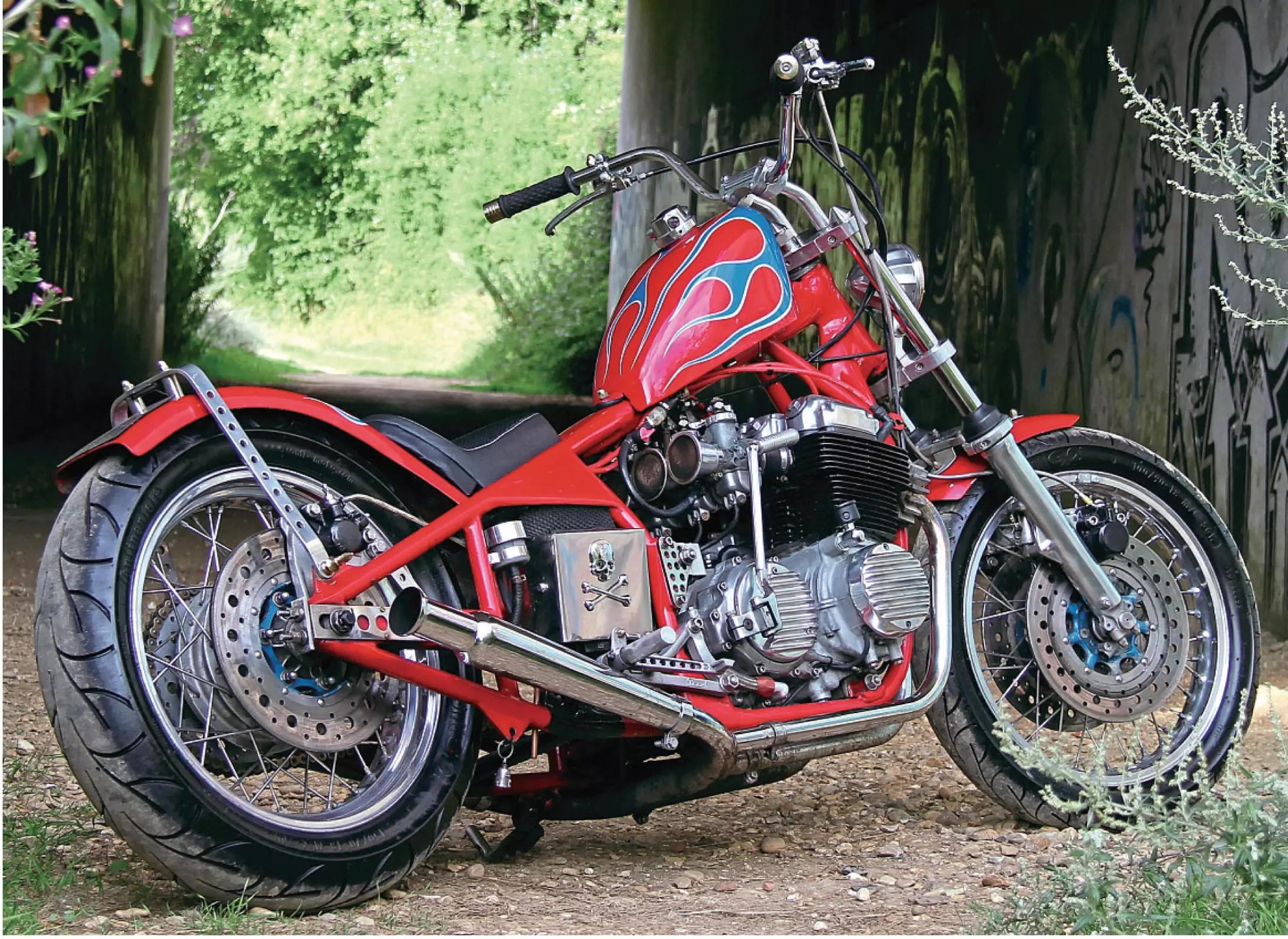
For the local biking community, this puts a lot on the table: one stop for dream machines, everyday rides, upgrades, repairs and parts. But the bigger story is ambition. Rideworx, who started from humble beginnings, has steadily grown, and with Indian Motorcycle Reading now in its fold, is staking a claim as a major player in the southeast's motorcycle retail and service world.

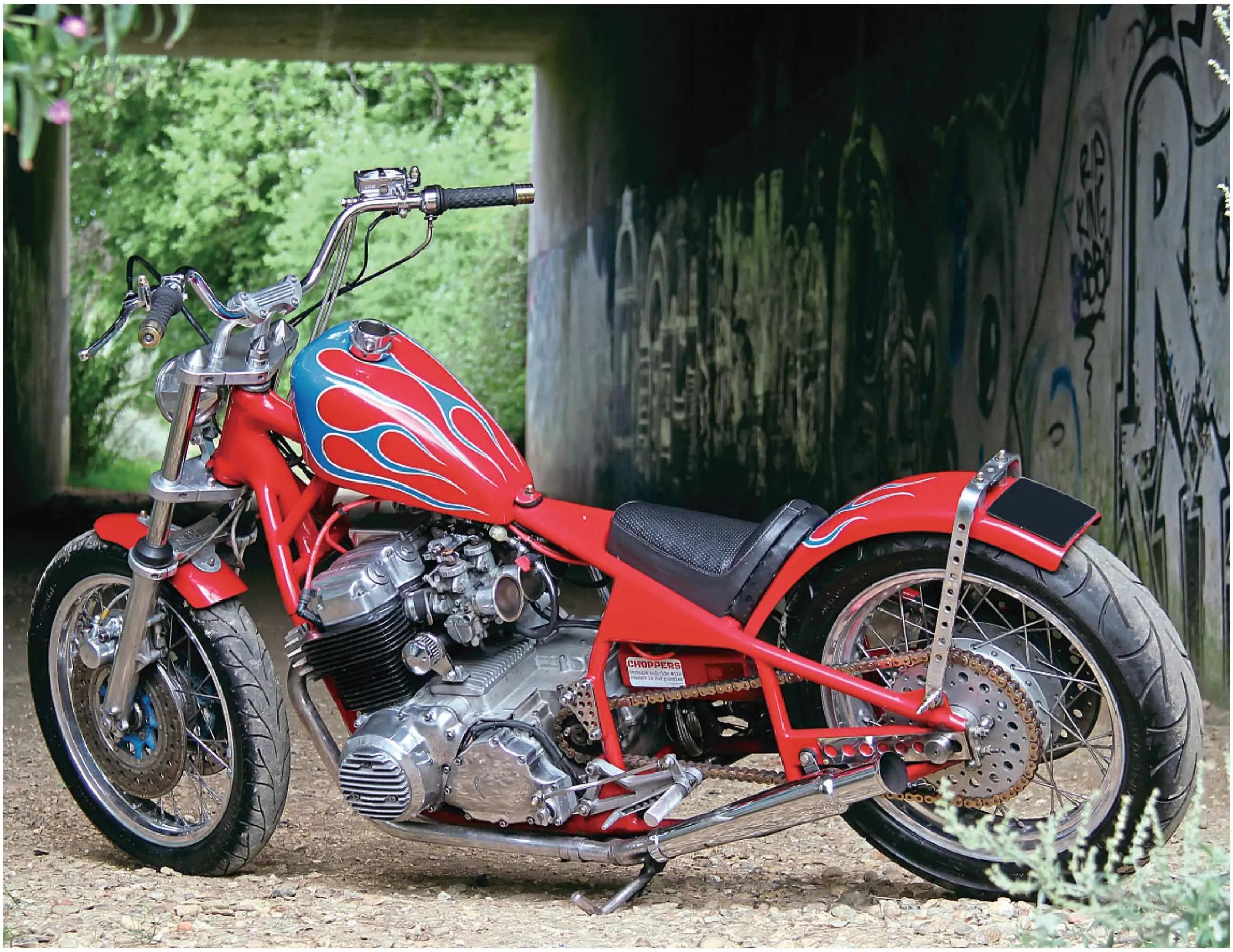
EIGHTIES 'ONDA

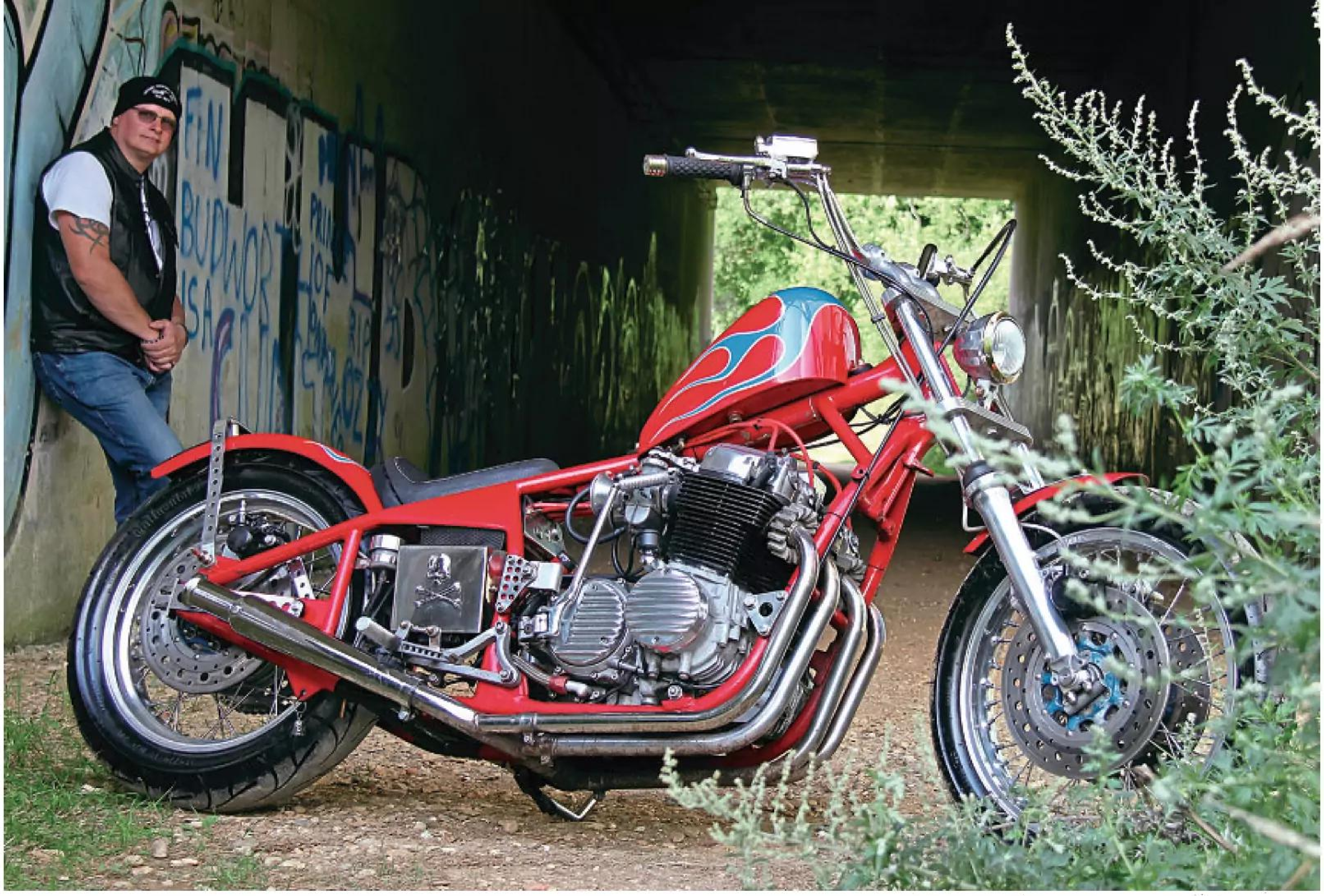
TAKING ON SOMEONE'S UNFINISHED PROJECT, ESPECIALLY ONE THAT'S SOMEWHAT OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE, CAN BE A BIT OF A DAUNTING PROSPECT, AS KEITH, THE OWNER OF THIS 'ERE 'ONDA CHOP, CAN READILY TESTIFY.

S

PPERS
suicide with
for pussies
RIP KING BBQ




CHOPPERS



HE was, and had been for a few years, a fan of going fast on motorcycles and was smoking about on a Suzuki GSX-R 1000 K1. He was starting to get a little disillusioned with it, though, as it was a little too 'electronic' for him, which meant he couldn't really tinker with it, and also, as he'd got more and more used it, he was finding that, every time he went out, everything swiftly became a race and, because Gixer Thous're more than a little rapid, he was in serious danger of losing his licence or, worse, his life. He decided that he needed to slow things down a little (well, quite a lot actually), and that he'd quite like something he could fix with a basic toolkit so, having always had a hankering for something with a rigid frame, started to look about for a chop. Soon after, he spotted on Facebook a quite in-yer-face red and blue 750/4 Honda in need of work and not too far away, arranged to pop down and see it and, not long after arriving, did a deal for the Honda for his Suzuki (with cash his way, of course – he's not stupid). The bike came with a wad of paperwork, including a list of previous owners, but he hasn't been able to track any of them down to find out any more about it (the guy he bought it off was fairly clueless, sadly) – if you recognise it and know anything about it, get in touch with us here and we'll pass the info' on.

The rebuild of the poor, unloved, laid-up chop began in earnest when he got it home, and that's when, he says, the fun began. What he thought was, basically, one model turned out to be a hybrid of at least two, with parts from others as well, and it took a wee while to get everything such that the old single overhead cam'd fire up and, when it did, it smoked worse than a 60-a-day beagle. The rings, it turned out, were shot ("Presumably that was why it was laid up in the first place," he says), but that wasn't too much of a problem cos not too far away in the grand scheme of things is the legendary Dave Silver's – David Silver Spares, specialists in all manner of old 'Ondas who, pretty much, have everything you'll ever need to rebuild almost any of Soichiro-san's two-wheeled children… thankfully. He was able to buy rings, gaskets, seals and all the other arcane items one needs to rebuild a fifty-odd-year-old bike from them and, with a little help from his good friend Donn (yes, with two 'n's, I haven't missed the 'a' off a lady's name) Turner, was able to get the motor back together, oil-tight and smoke-free, not too long after.

The frame it sits in is of unknown parentage, but was obviously made by someone who knew what they were doing, as is evident when you look at the rigid rear end with its horizontal and vertical bracing that has a very definite '80s hardtail streetfighter air about it, something that's added to by the use of rear-sets rather than mid-mounts or forwards.

Whoever did it carried on that care and attention, moulding in the side-panels, and drilling the one-off engine mounts to match the mudguard struts and the rear sprocket, making a set of slab yokes to hold the forks, and giving the bike a new set of wheels based around later twin disc hubs and a disc rear brake in place of the original drum hub. The front did give Keith a bit of trouble; getting the left caliper hanger to line up correctly with the disc was a faff, but it was sorted by simply shaving the brake pads that side so as they sat nicely against the disc – the joys of chop-building, eh?

The bike's exhaust is worth a mention, too. Again, whoever made it knew all about back pressure n' balance pipes n' stuff, and that means that, although it looks like two separate two-into-one systems, both pipes're linked by a horseshoe-shaped collector under the motor that allows the exhaust gases to escape in a balanced way through the tulips/chopper pots/whatever you want to call them that follow the lower edge of the frame perfectly. A similar amount of thought's gone into the oil tank – it's a custom hexagonal one that's been mounted front-to-back in the frame, rather than across it left-to-right as is more normal, and the battery box's been custom made to sit on the side of it very neatly. Electrics? They sit on a stainless plate under the (recovered) seat (by A&R Pound across the border in Baldock in Herts) that holds the most basic electrical components he could get away with.

Donn, a man who doesn't look like he should be wearing a tall hat and a mu'umu'u with sigils on it, was asked very nicely to rewire the chop for him, and he did it in two shakes of a lamb's tail… however quickly that is. There were just some last fettling bits to be done and then Keith, and Donn, stood back and contemplated their handiwork… although not for too long as Keith wanted to ride it. He went off down the road, and returned shortly after with a huge grin on his face – it all worked as it should. That grin has, ever since, barely been off his face (well, below his bandana/snood thing), and he uses the old 'Onda on a regular basis, as can be seen on the reality-defying Insta' 360 videos on his Facebook page.

"Lots of people" he says "asked why I didn't totally repaint the bike, and replace the forks and wheels and brakes with newer bits an' bobs, and there're two reasons. Firstly I wanted to keep it as it was when I got it, paint chips an' scratches an' all, so that it didn't lose its identity and, secondly, I just wanted to get it on the road and ride it." Good enough reasons for me…

NIK

SPEC:

1976 Honda CB750 engine (rejetted carbs, open velocity stacks, Dyna coils, one-off exhaust, aftermarket engine covers, modified sprocket cover)/frame (modified)/forks, one-off drilled engine mounts, Raask rear-sets, Continental ContiGo tyres (100/90/18 front, 150/70/18 rear), 18-inch Akront alloy rims, stainless spokes, later Honda twin disc front hub/disc rear hub/rear master-cylinder, Honda CB550F calipers, unknown alloy slab yokes, HEL braided lines (front/rear), unknown handlebars, aftermarket front brake master-cylinder, Biltwell grips, aftermarket front mudguard (modified), one-off alloy mudguard mount, Micron fork brace, Sportster tank (modified) with aftermarket cap, one-off seat, moulded side-panels, aftermarket hexagonal oil tank, aftermarket flat rear mudguard (modified), one-off drilled alloy mudguard struts, one-off battery box, one-off electrics plate, later Honda CB900 Bol d'Or rear caliper, DID X-ring 530 chain, JT Sprockets front sprocket, unknown drilled rear sprocket, one-off loom, aftermarket alloy/brass headlight, small aftermarket LED rear light

FINISH:

Original red & blue paint by original builder, powder-coating by original builder, polishing by original builder

ENGINEERING:

Bike rebuilt by owner, seat re-covered by A&R Pound, electrics by Donn Turner

THANKS TO:

"Donn Turner for help all round; Pete at Bikehead (**01440 268110** or **www.bikehead.co.uk**); & Selwyn Stickler for extra advice…"

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Event

THE ROCK & BLUES

FOR ME, THE ROCK & BLUES IS PROBABLY THE BEST VALUE EVENT OF THE YEAR – A FANTASTIC WEEKEND OF BIKES, MUSIC, WEATHER AND COMPANY; ALL WERE BRILLIANT.

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Three-night bike rallies are getting rarer these days, but hey. I was there from the Thursday, and I wasn't disappointed. First to hit the stage, nu-metallers Nu Call launched the show with a thunderous presence, followed by The Darkniss (no prizes for guessing their set list), who were beyond brilliant – Joe Gash's vocal range was incredible, and his exuberant performance as frontman for the band was superb; this's a band who are as good, if not better, than the original. Last, but by no means least for a first night, were Ska-Waddy who, with two lead singers, Natasha Marie and Chris Willis, can diversify their repertoire; as well as playing all the ska hits we know and love, they cover many other favourites of the era with a ska interpretation. If Thursday evening offered a taste of what was to come, it was going to be an epic weekend!

Friday morning while most were still sleeping, the skies loomed black and there was a worrying dampness in the air but, thankfully, it rolled slowly away, and the sun broke through to fry anyone without suncream, and blind us all from the stream of chrome and glitter gently proceeding up the hill to enter the custom show. It was nice to see quite a few new builds present this year, and the return of several familiar faces who've been off the scene for a while due to life's little obstacles. There was, as always, lots of pointing and chuntering as opinions abounded as to what was and wasn't a worthy entry, and how things could've been done differently, but that's half the fun.

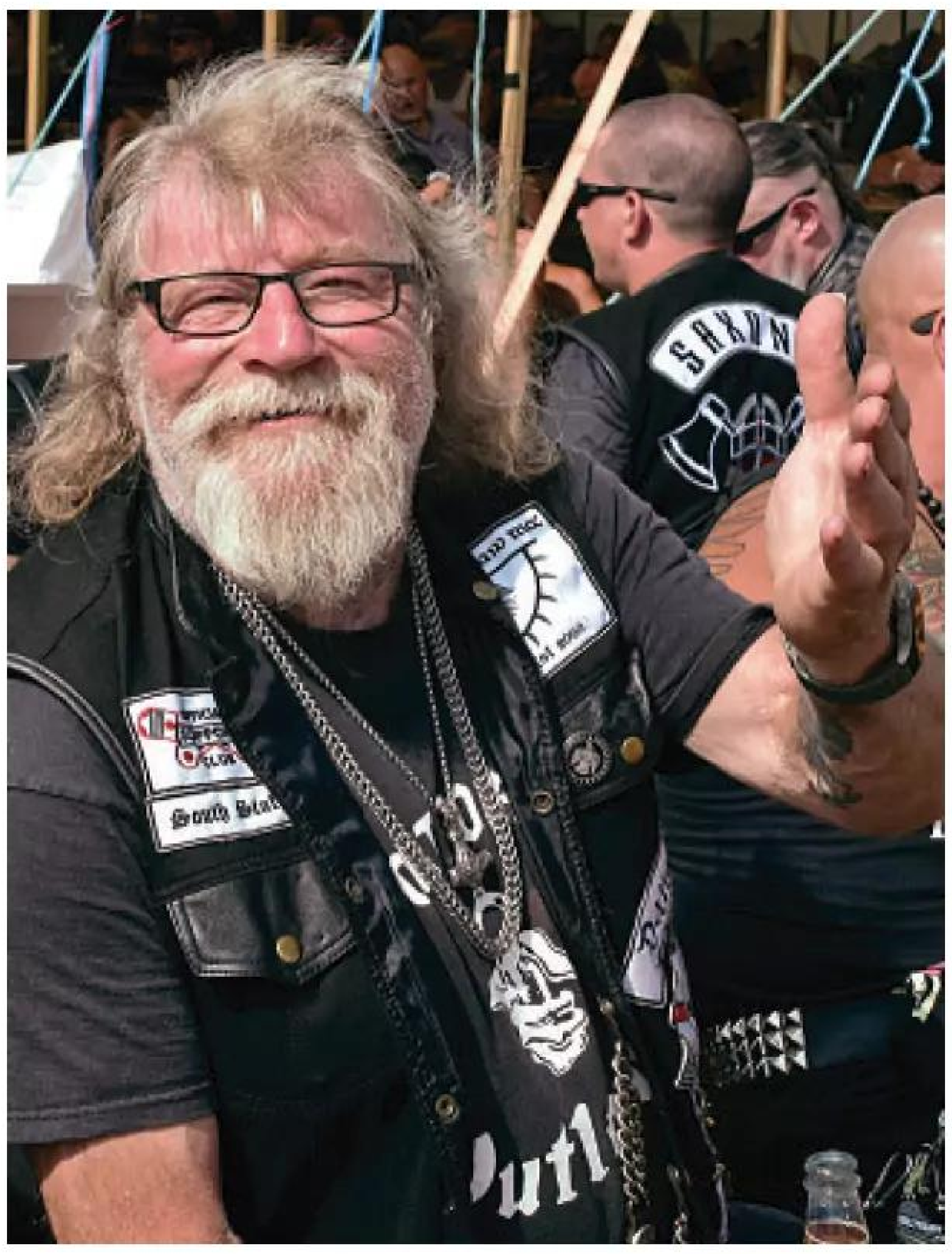
The sixteen bands over the weekend encompassed just about every genre of rock, and anyone who thinks this event's all oily leather and heavy metal couldn't be further from the truth; there was

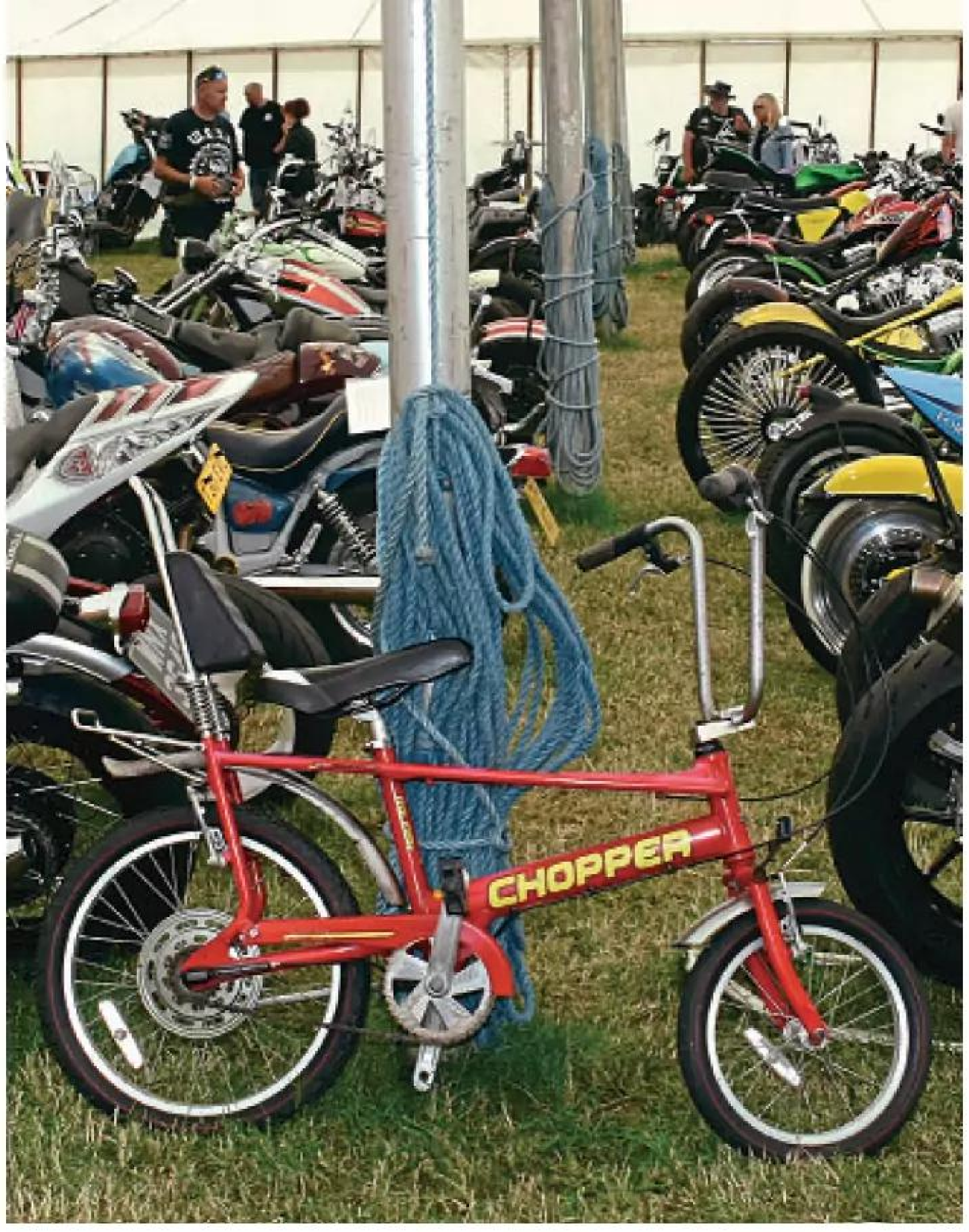
Norton

SHITBOX

70

CYMRU




CHOPPER

CUSTOM SHOW
BACK STREET HEROES

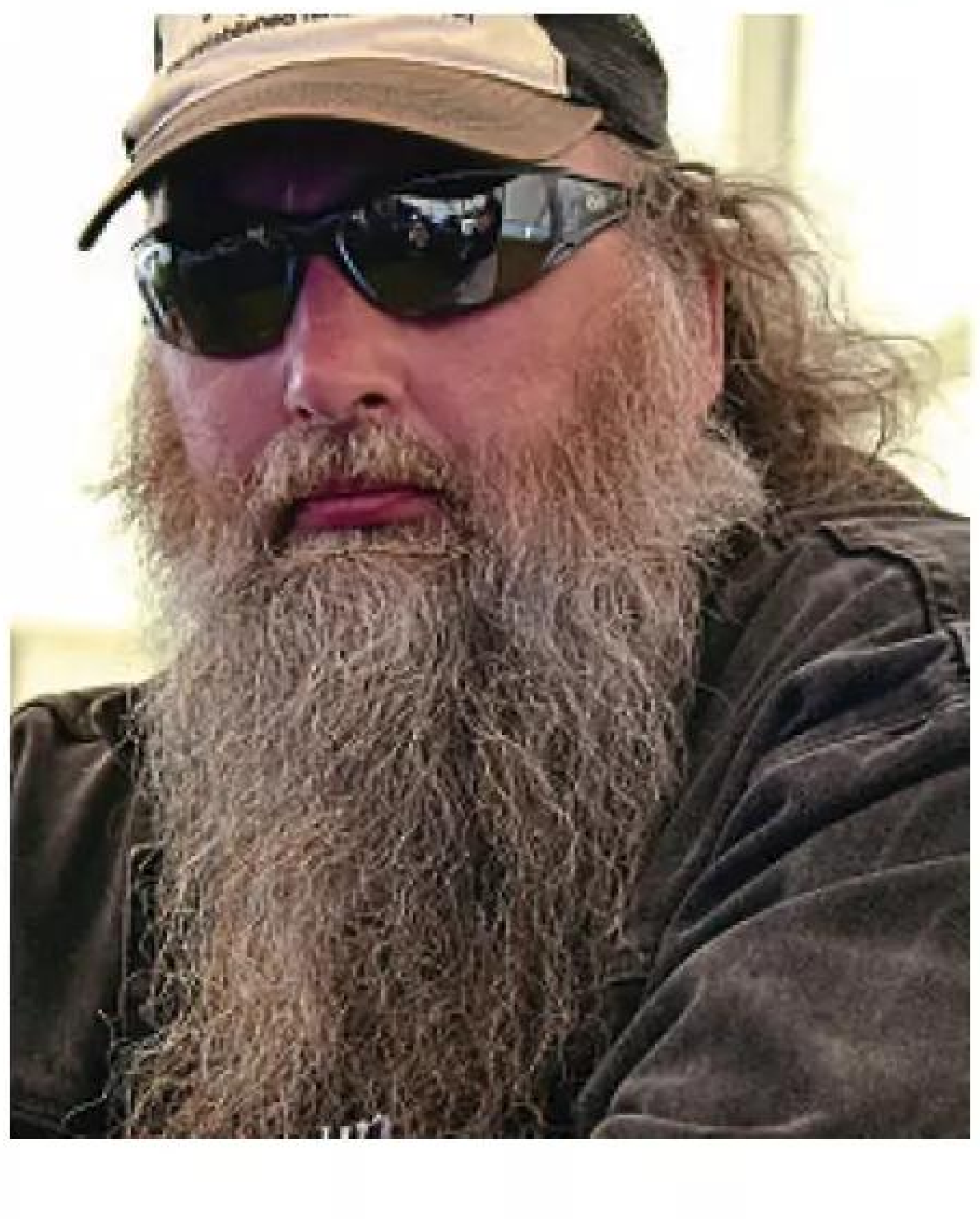
HATED

KEBAB

something for every taste: harmonious vocals from the Rock Choir; folk-rock from Ferocious Dog; metal from rock goddesses JOANovARC; Queen tribute Real Magic; '80s-style hair metal from Tailgunner; the weekend had everything – even Elvis! Friday and Saturday nights culminated with brilliant performances from headliners Ferocious Dog (who organised probably the event's first circle-pit), and famous blues-rockers The Quireboys. Regular Rock & Blues sensations Reenie's Rockettes put on four dynamite shows, and some may've spotted a new addition in the troupe this year – Alex, the first male in the line-up. Empowerment isn't just for the ladies!

Daytime showground entertainment was provided by Druzno Mercenaries who put on two large displays per day, simulating 1:1 hand combat, 5:5 bridge battles, and a large group ship battle. They set up a Viking-style encampment showing a living history (as best they could whilst complying with site regulations), where families and warriors depicting life in Viking times, and were happy to talk about what they do. The fairground was back; alcohol and bumper cars are always the favourite of fun-fair rides. There were plenty of trade stalls to cater for your interests and charities to support. A Telecaster guitar signed by The Prodigy was raffled in aid of Acorn Cancer Support, and the NABD stall, manned for the last time by Phil Morris and Dawn, were raffling another bike. Phil was not the only stallholder to say goodbye here. Tigger, the legendary Tigger, and her clothing stall, who've been on the rally circuit since Adam was a lad, is also retiring this year. Enjoy your retirement, both!

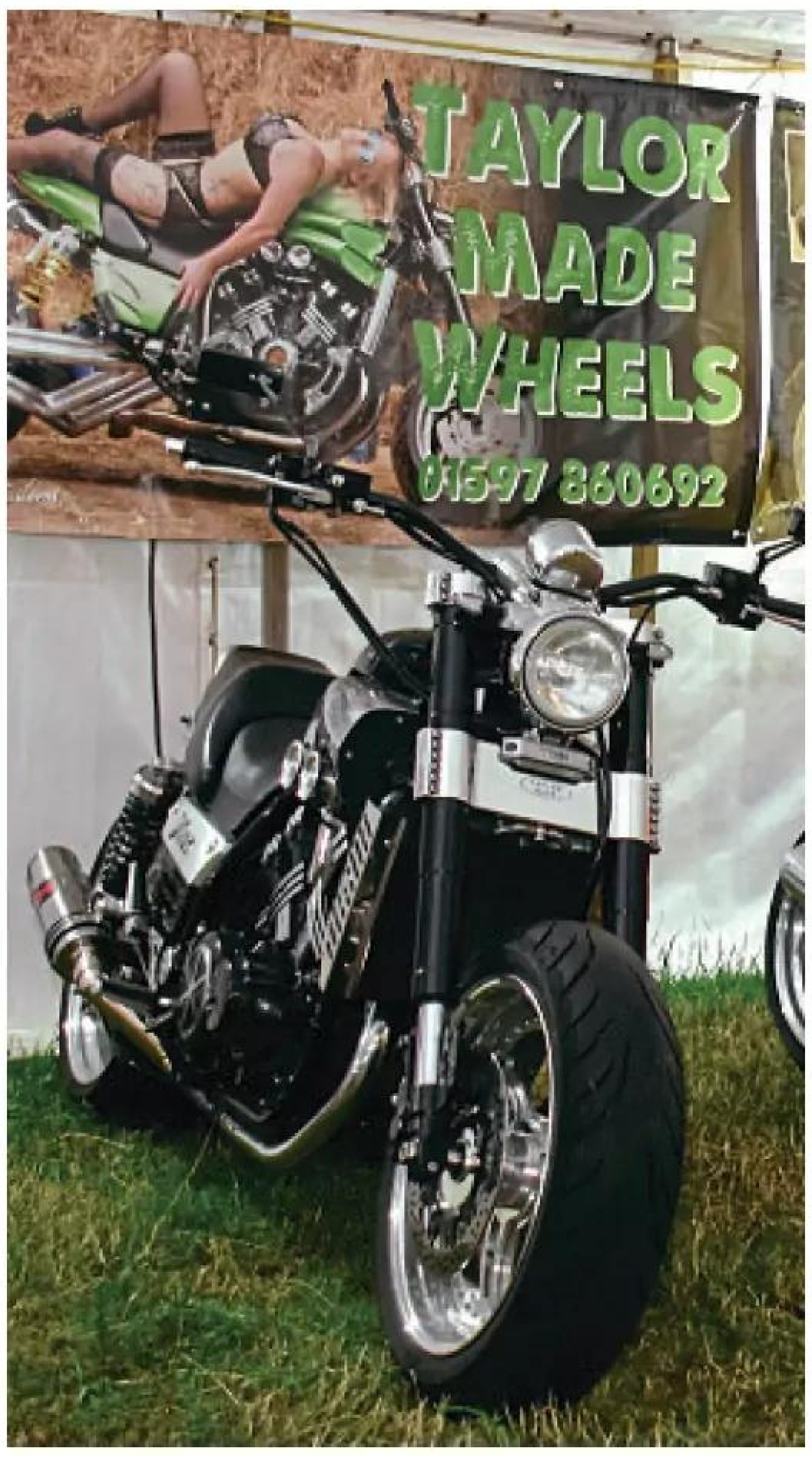
The jewel in the crown of this event, though, is always the custom show, this year judged by just Vic Jefford as Lin had to be elsewhere due to the high demand for their judging skills. Starting with winners first: Best Classic/Vintage was a 1969 Norton Commando, found by George Milnes rotting away in a



CUSTOM SHOW
BACK STREET HEROES

CUSTOM SHOW

CUSTOM SHOW



Outlaws
WEST COAST CHOPPERS

garden ten years ago; Best Engineering was James Rogers' Moon Eyes twin-engine Triumph, as seen in BSH a couple of issues ago; Best Ladies was Mary Kate's Evo Softail, built by Tom Batterbee, and painted by Flakey Dave; Best Streetfighter was Buster Lakey's green GSX-R turbo; Best Paint was won by Mareus' Shovelhead (which took Best Chop last year), again painted by Flakey; Best Chopper was Paddy from NCC Jorvik's Dan Death-built Hayabusa; Best Harley was H from NCC Staffs' Evo, built in 2005, and featured in BSH 267; and Best In Show was, deservedly, Chris Smithers' stunning 'Hated' showbike, another you'll see in BSH soon.

The Runners-Up were: Classic/ Vintage was Rob Wood of Twisted Spine Motorcycles' Villiers/KTM hybrid; Engineering was Andy Wright's M8 Harley rigid chop (the first M8 we've seen!); Ladies was Nikki's No Nonsense Choppers Sportster; Streetfighter was Luke Wilton's '99 Yamaha R1 with its Japanese-style paint by Xtreme Paint Studios; Paint was Paul Stolworthy's Revtec by Ty Lawler at Pageant Paintwork (with its painted seat!); Chopper was Curly from NCC Staffs' Matt Hotch-framed Ultima; Harley was Sean Batterbee's 1450 Twin Cam with its WW2 night fighter paint; and Runner-Up Best in Show went to Tom Batterbee's immaculate latest West Coast Choppers classic.

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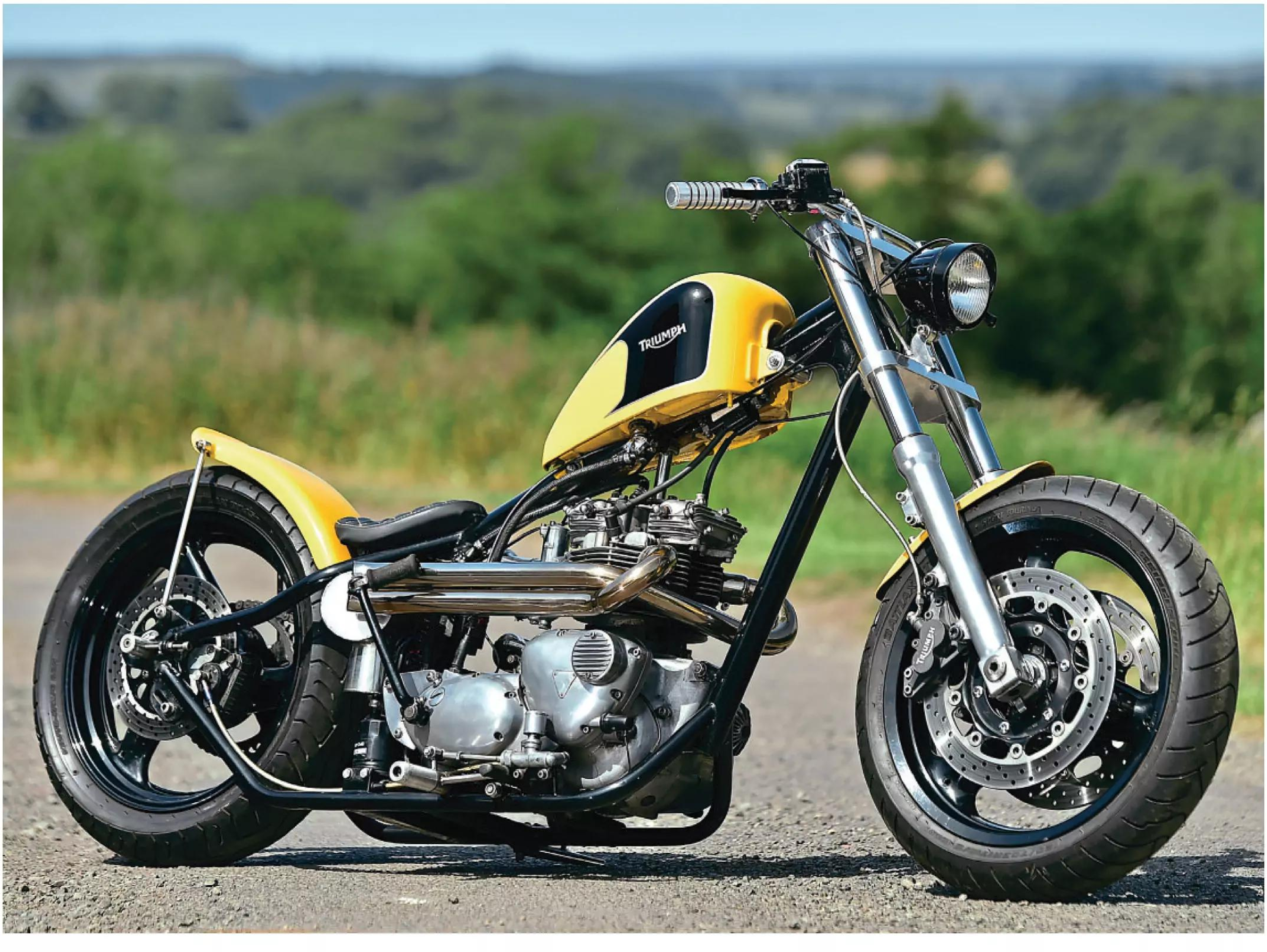
LIFE-LONG LOVE

CARL GARRETT BOUGHT THE BIKE THAT WAS TO BECOME THE CHOP YOU SEE HERE NEW BACK IN 1984 WHEN HE WAS JUST 18 YEARS OLD, WHICH MEANS THAT, AS THE MERIDEN FACTORY CLOSED IN 1983, IT WAS ONE OF THE VERY LAST OFF THE PRODUCTION LINE.

TRIUMPH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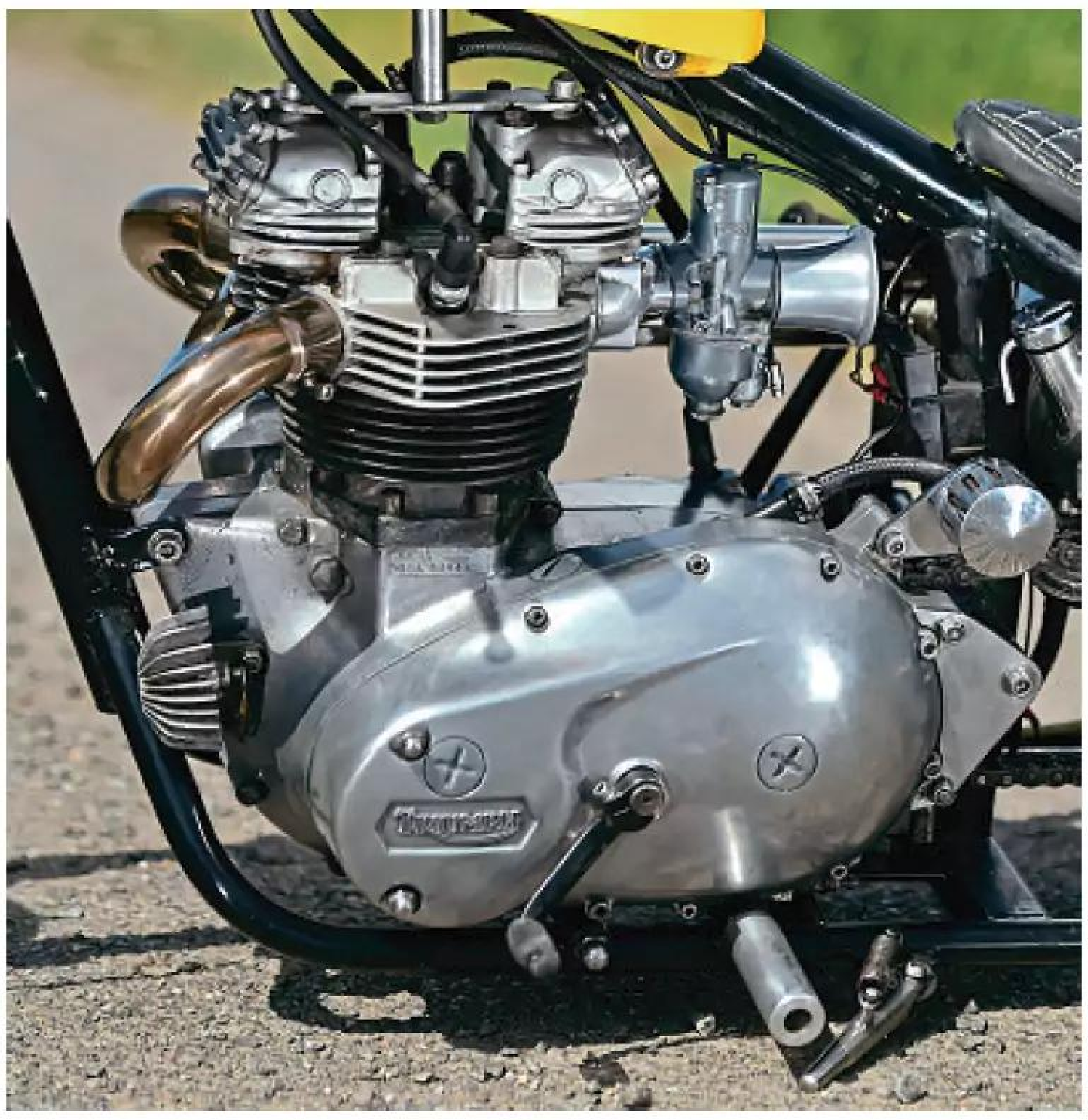

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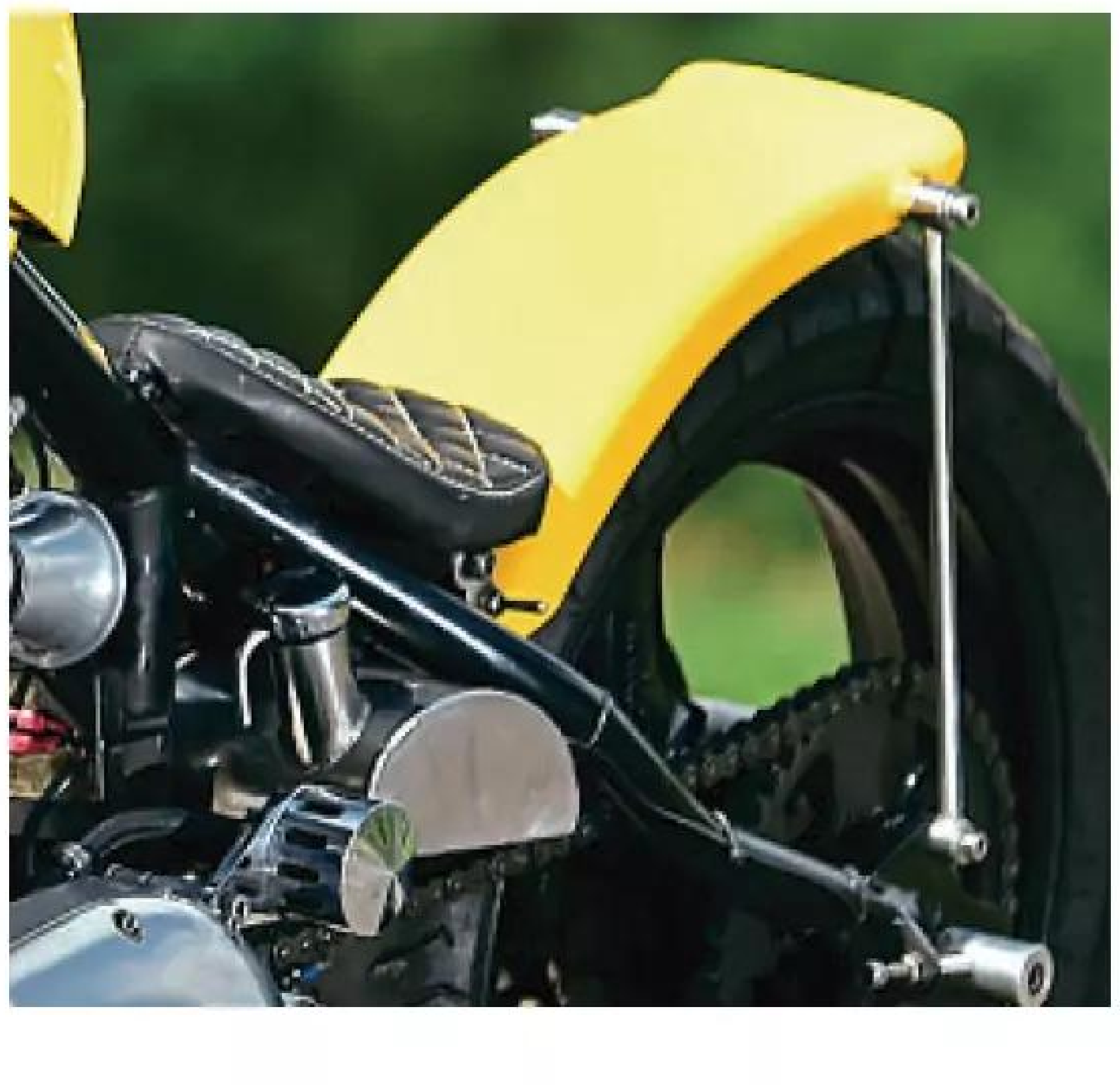

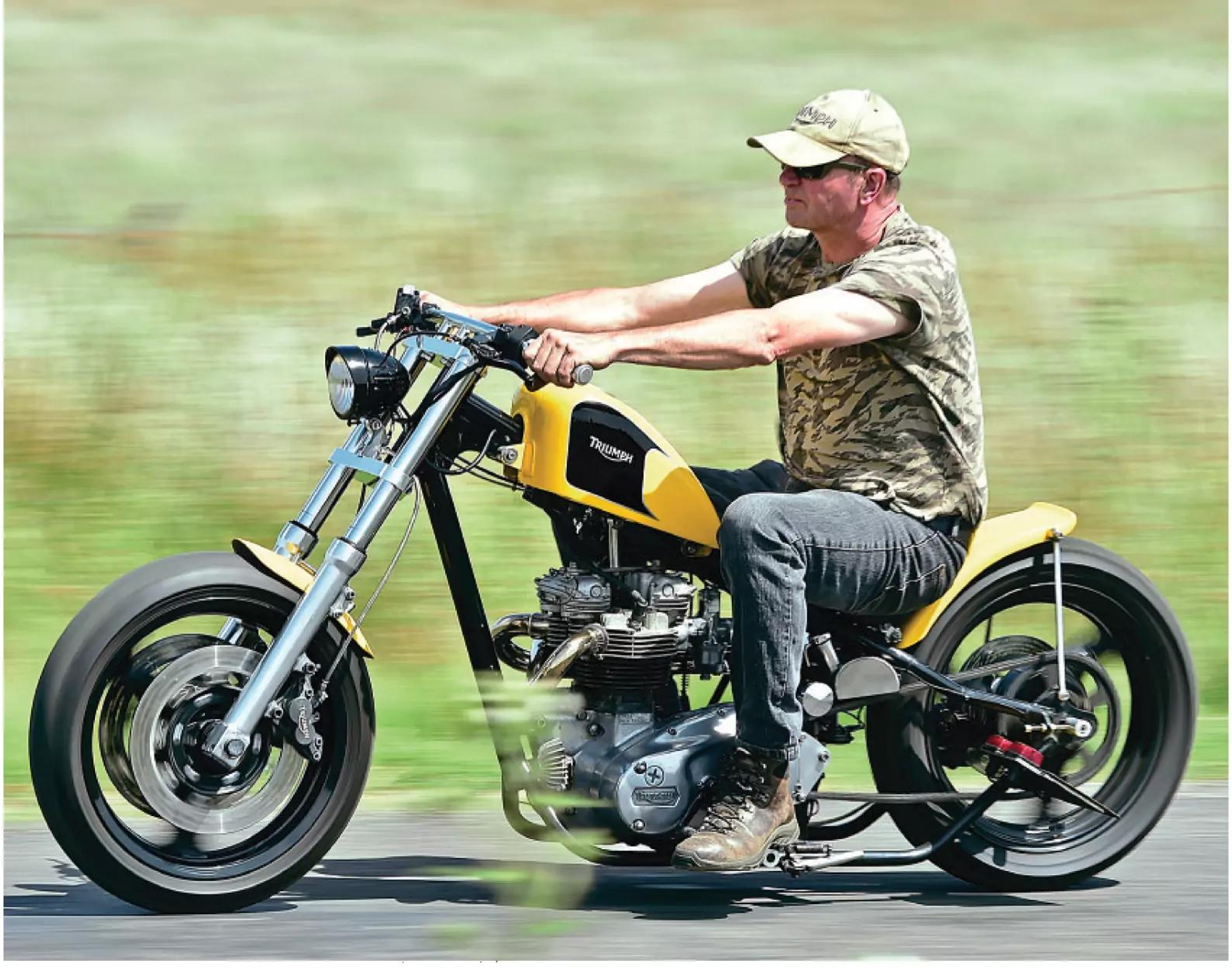

It's a TR65 Thunderbird, basically a 650cc, single-carb version of the T140 Bonneville that uses a similar oil-in-frame set up, and he rode it around as was until he moved up ont' moors of North Yorkshire nearly twenty years later. There he met a man whose name is synonymous with British custom bike building, Mark Graham, and the guys he rode with – a bunch of like-minded reprobates calling themselves the Whitby 77s. Their bikes had a certain minimalist style all of their own – they were often, but not always, small, low and lean, with short 'pipes, hardtails, often older engines with more modern running gear; what was to be remembered fondly by many as a very cool late '90s/early 2000s look. Of course, he was quite taken with the style, and wanted his own version, so Mark bent up the tubes for a very Triumphesque hardtail frame, with a single down-tube and Triumph-style front engine mounts, and welded it together. They used the front and back ends from a Suzuki GS500E twin (well, the three-spoke wheels, the brakes and the forks anyway), but not so very long after had to change the front end to that from a 1994 Triumph Daytona (from Rufforth autojumble actually) cos someone nicked the Suzuki forks from the bike shop they'd been sent to for straightening… people're weird, aren't they, I mean, why would you nick a set of bent forks? Anyway, it was at around this point that Carl was going through a somewhat rough patch in his life, so much so that he didn't really have much time for the bike, but the rest of the 77s, working together, and without telling him, set to and put the bike together for him, presenting it to him all up and running and just needing to be painted and polished – true friends indeed!

That was, Carl says, around 2000/2001, probably the peak years for the 77s. "Mark, Ian, Dicky and myself, along with Mick on his Matchless. I do remember arguing with Mark about the lack of padding in the seat, and him questioning my sexuality… Great memories of the days of 77 club bikes and especially the people who are no longer with us, like Tom Howard, who wired my bike – the Triumph god who constantly kept it running, whatever the issue, especially on the roadside. Mark was a star. Over the years he produced some gob-stopping bikes from a shed in the North York Moors for himself and others, always doing enough to put his stamp on a bike, but leaving you the space to make it yours and unique to you, too."

In fact it was Mark, and another 77er, Dicky, who had a hand in pretty much all the Whitby bikes built, and they did the lion's share of the work, making (deep breath) the stainless 'bars; the seat base (covered by an outfit in Redcar who are still going to this day, Auto Trimming); the purpose-shaped oil tank with built-in filter; the shortie rear muddie and struts; the aircraft filler in the tank; and way, way more. The finished bike, painted a rather fetching blue, was featured in issue 213 of this very magazine (the one with Destiny Cycles' amazing white GSX-R on the cover – thanks to Lin for scanning the old article from it to help with this one), and was one of the bikes that makes you nod in appreciation and say 'Yes' when you see it.

That was in the early 2000s and, as the years went by, the 77s all kind o' drifted apart to do other things. The T-Bird, by his own admission, wasn't the most comfortable thing in the world, and at some point he bought a later (Hinckley) Thunderbird Sport and rode the older Meriden bike less and less, until he retired it to the back of his shed. Then, a few years back, with his 60th birthday approaching, and wanting to ride it again while his back'd allow him to, he decided to drag it out of the shed where it'd been languishing, and pull it completely apart to get it refreshed and running again. He did a few frame mods, adding extra gusset plates and so on; had the frame and various other parts powder-coated; pulled the engine apart to check it over and repolish all the casings. and forks and so on; and had it repainted in a similar yellow and black paint scheme to that of his T-Bird Sport by Race Refinish in Redcar. The new paint completely transforms the bike and gives it a new identity – the blue was nice, granted, but the yellow and black looks so right, you can't imagine it any other way. It was definitely that, and its essential Whitbyness (if there is such a thing), that caught my eye in photos from the Yorkshire MAG rallies and led to the bike being photographed and appearing on these pages.

"It's been back on the road two or three years now," says Carl, "and I fecking love it (although my back less so), and pottering around Yorkshire on it, there's no better day. I'm glad I've hung onto it, but I've always been a sucker for Triumphs – proud to be a fossil! Funny thing is, I ride it that much that I've noticed I ride it the same as I do the big (T-)Bird (I've named 'em Big Bird and Baby Bird), and that has twice the ground clearance (and suspension). When I'm gone, I'm hoping my son'll want it and keep it going, although he might have his work cut out as all the Triumph gurus'll be gone then, too." And on that cheery note…

NIK
PICS BY **SIMON EVERETT**

SPEC:
1984 Triumph TR65 Thunderbird 650 engine (rebored/new pistons/rings, rejetted Amal Concentric carb, aftermarket bell-mouth, Boyer electronic ignition, one-off exhausts), one-off hardtail frame, one-off mid-mount foot-pegs/controls, 1994 Triumph Daytona front wheel/brakes/forks, one-off slab yokes, unknown front mudguard (modified), Goodridge braided brake lines, one-off stainless 'bars, aftermarket master-cylinder/switchgear/grips, one-off reservoir, Sportster tank (modified), one-off seat, aftermarket rear mudguard (modified), one-off mudguard struts, one-off oil tank, one-off battery box, Suzuki GS500 rear wheel/brake/master-cylinder (modified), minimal loom, aftermarket headlight/tail-light

FINISH:
International yellow/gloss black by Race Refinish (**07908 990831** or Facebook), powder-coating by Yorvik Engineering Services (**01904 768515** or **www.yorvik-es.co.uk**), polishing by owner

ENGINEERING:
85% by Mark Graham & Dicky Attridge, rest by owner

THANKS TO:
"Mark Graham; Dicky Attridge; Ian Thompson; Tom Howard for the wiring; Race Refinish for the paint; Yorvik Engineering Services for the 'coating; & the rest of the Whitby 77s…"

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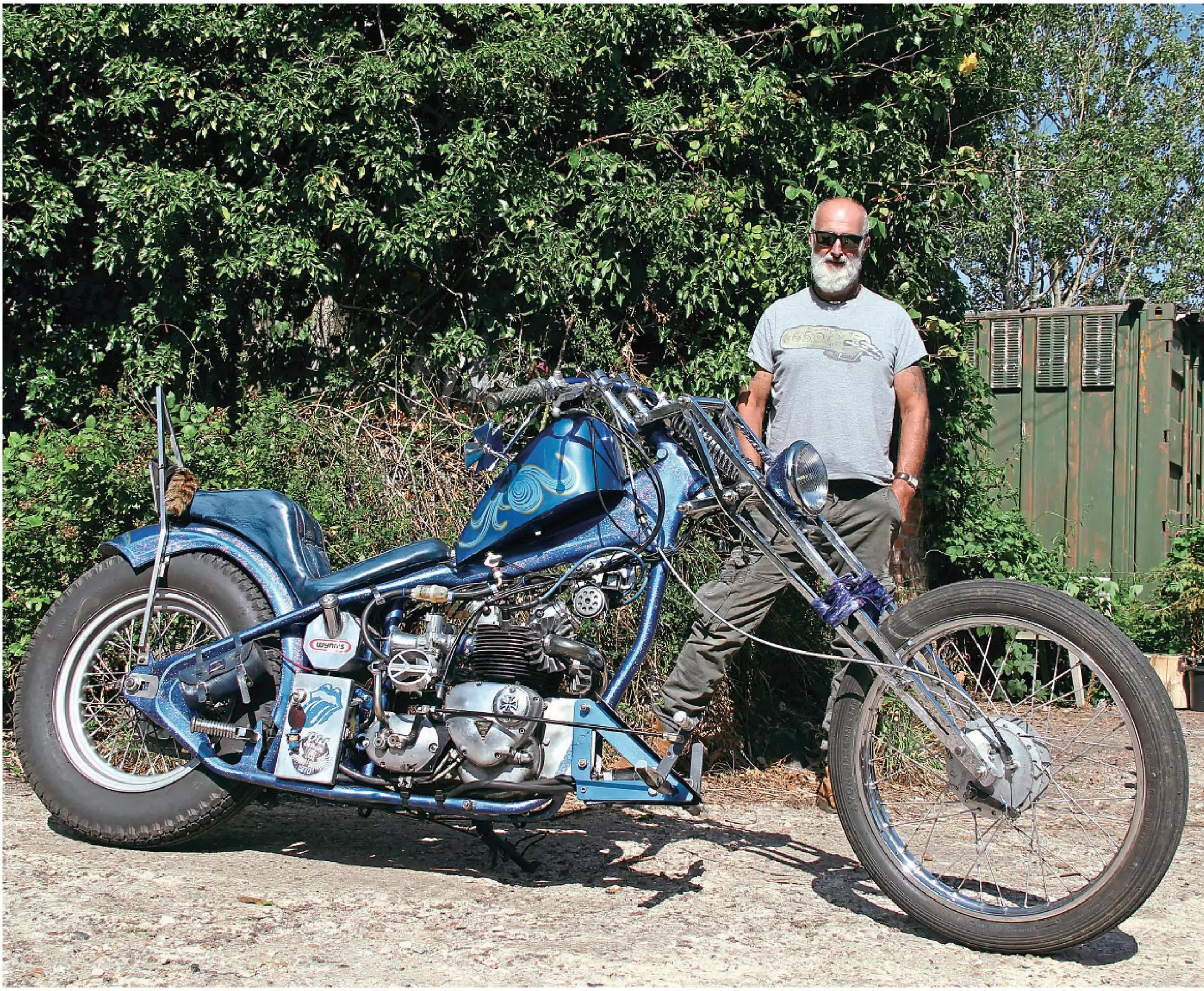
CEPHALOPO SURVIVOR

D

> “GOD KNOWS WHY, BUT I SEEM TO HAVE ACCRUED AN ECLECTIC MIX OF BIKES OVER RECENT YEARS, INCLUDING A MONSTER TWO-LITRE AMERICAN PRO-STREET CUSTOM, A RUST-PATINATED 50cc NSU QUICKLY MOPED CALLED BILLY WHIZZ, A COUPLE OF OLD HARLEYS, AND MY BELOVED XS650 RAT-ROD ‘THE SPUD’ (AS FEATURED IN BSH). THEY’RE ALL RIDEABLE, TOO.”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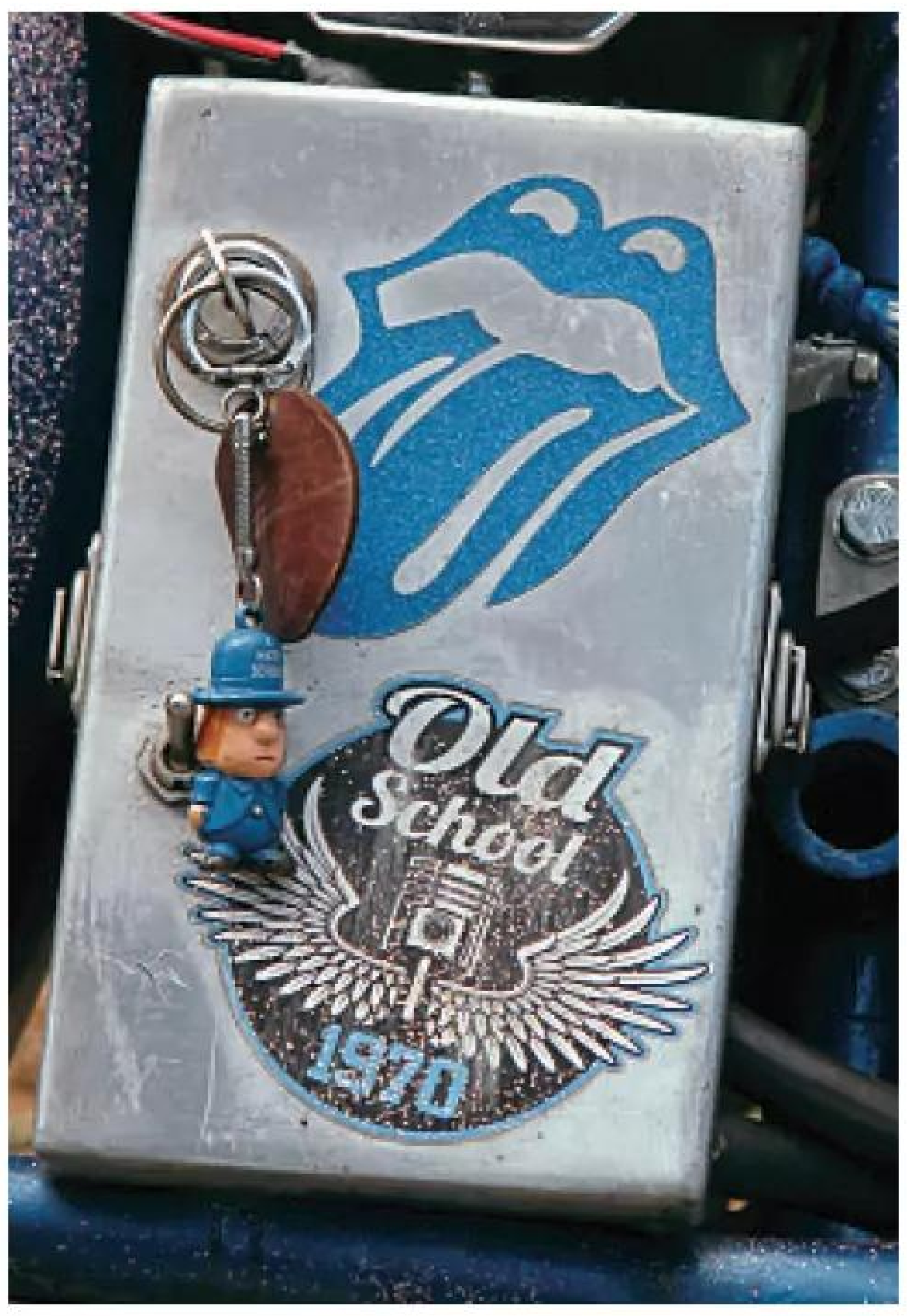
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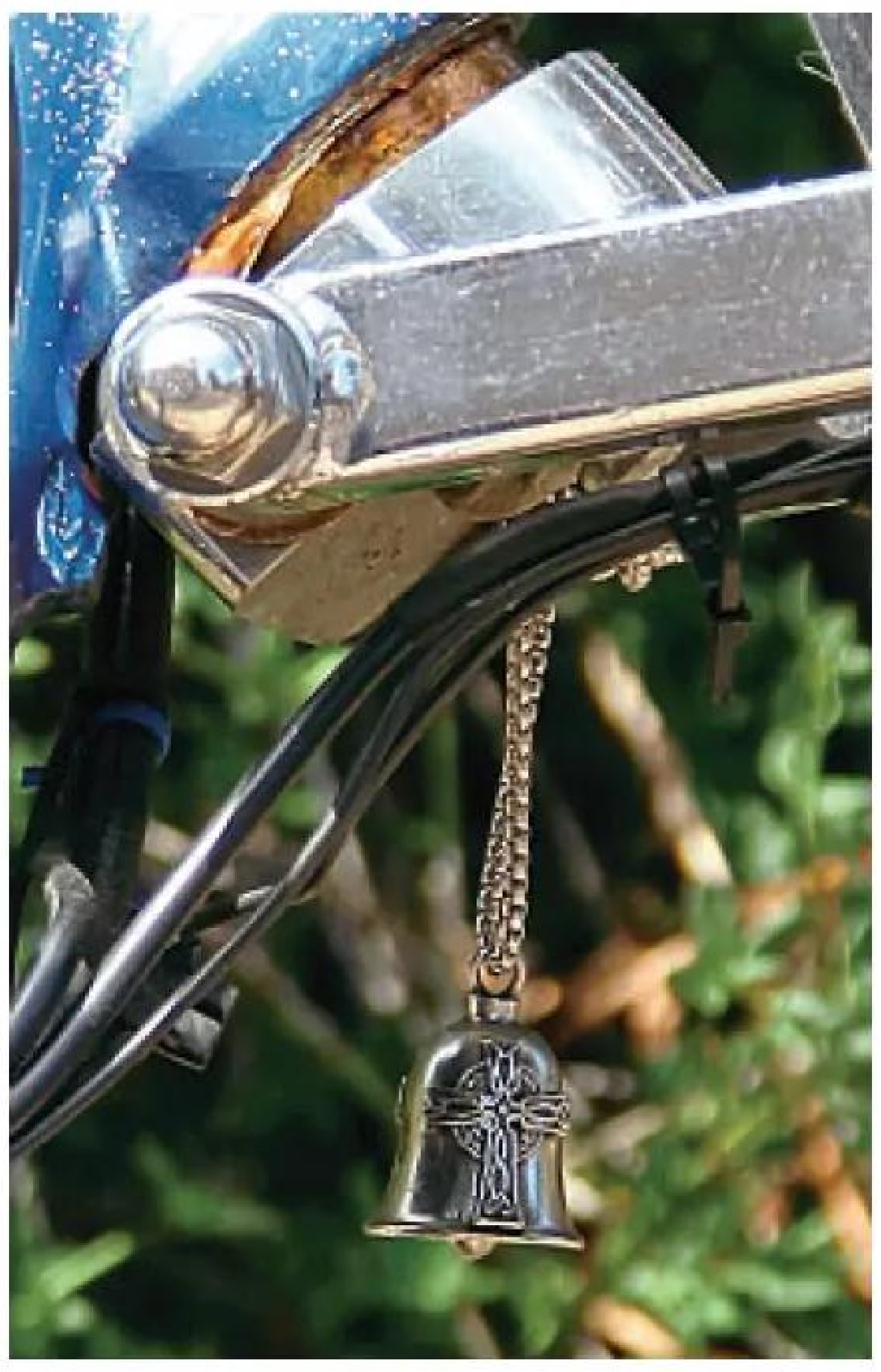

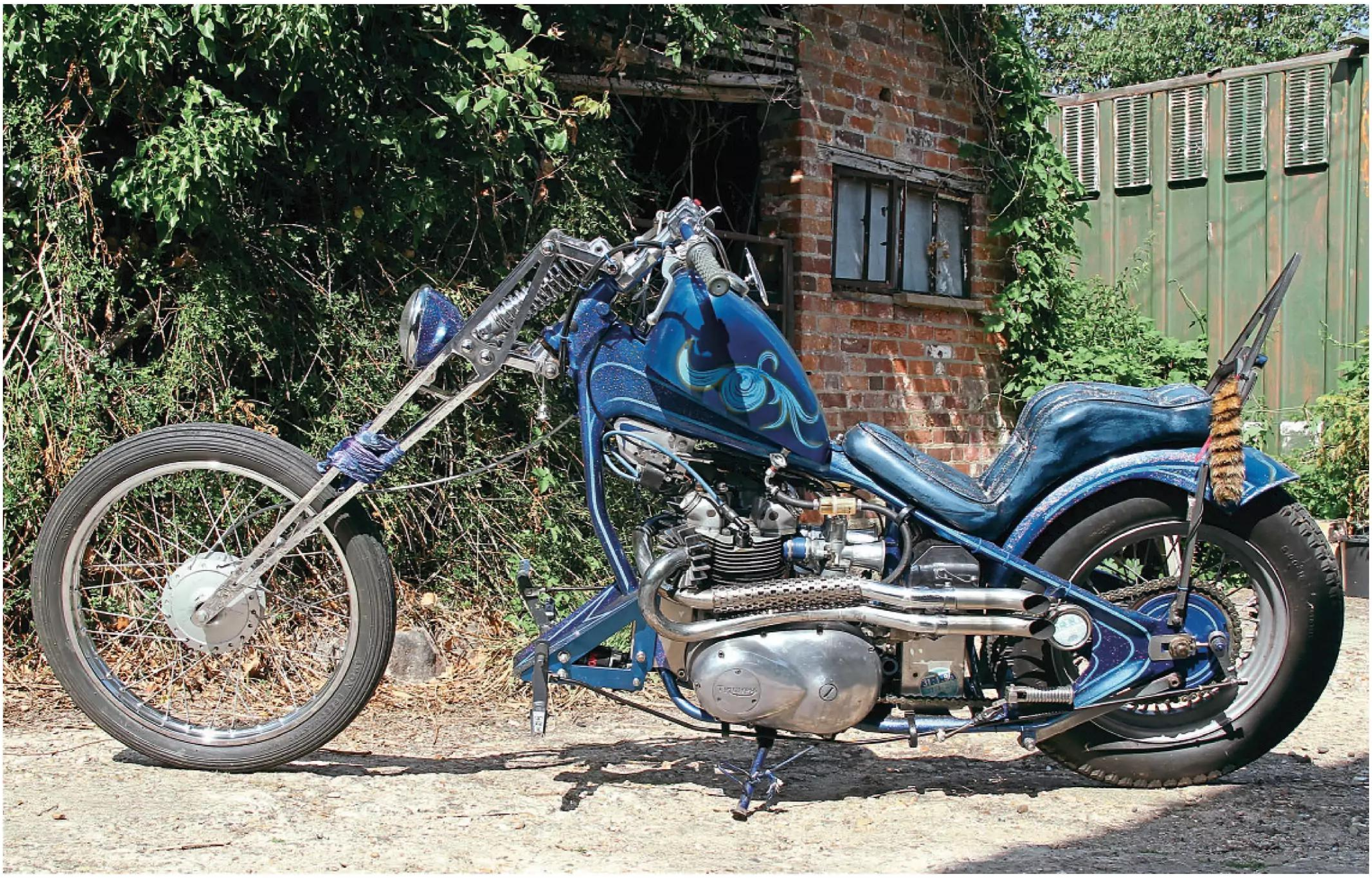

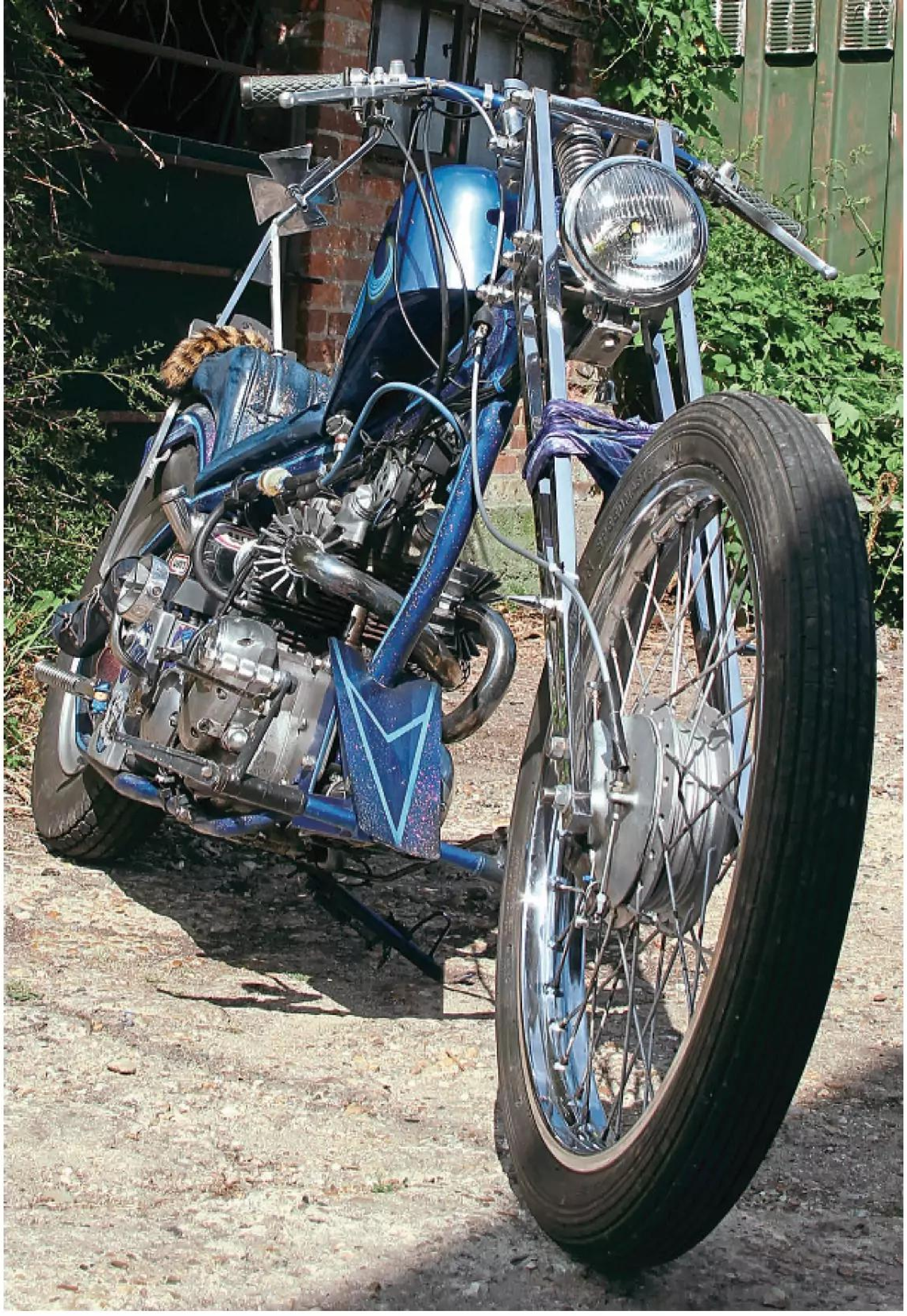

“I didn't need another bike, did I? A mate (questionably) named Fred (whose black Triumph was in BSH a while ago) kept going on about this old Brit chop he'd acquired, and how it'd so suit me. ‘NOT INTERESTED!’ I said. ‘I repeat, NOT INTERESTED!’ He, though, knew I'd just finished my last project and that meant I was probably fair prey for another. He kept on and on and, being a sociable sort, I said I'd pop round, but only for a look.

“On entering the sacred man-shed there it was, roughly assembled, perched on his bench. It was radical, long, lean and low, and looked to be a genuine ’70s survivor, and turned out to be a local machine having spent the last 26 years in someone's loft. It was metallic blue, and the top tubes and rear frame tubes'd been plated, filled, then moulded, as was the fad in those days, and it sported a shiny blue, buttoned, split-level seat underneath which sat an iconic big fat chopper rear wheel. The tank was (well, is) a small Sportster-style affair with a slightly weird, swirly graphic like a blue octopus (what was the artist smoking at the time?) and, adding to its low-slung profile, it sported single-shock girder forks, and a skinny 21-inch chromed wheel with a little hamburger-braked hub. The ’bars, put on by Fred, suited the look.

“The rear of the rolled edge mudguard'd been fabricated with a flare but, sadly, it was full of drilled holes, and was a bit of a mess where various sissy-bars'd been bolted on to try over the years, but the moulded and curved gussets either side of the back wheel gave it some ’70s flavour. Behind the mudguard sat the customary alloy box where all the electrickery was hidden, and it came with an iconic chromed hex(agon) oil tank. It was, though, in a sorry state with a rusty rear rim, and chipped and crazed paint, several scars in the tank, holes where holes shouldn't be, and missing axles and various bits. The engine had a broken cooling fin, and road damage to the lower casing and, to add to that, the frame was bent somewhere on the downtube. That said, it looked the t*ts!

“The frame, I found out, was from a 1966 Tiger 500 which'd been generously raked, and hardtailed, and the engine in it was from (only) slightly later, as in 1967, unit motor that'd been, apparently, race-tuned and fitted with an Electrex battery-less ignition system. The head'd been modified to take parallel Amal carbs with extended inlet manifolds and racy velocity stacks, and the exhausts were high-level, left-side, desert sled-style. I was informed it was one of legendary East Anglian bike builder John Gibson's earlier creations, since confirmed by Mr Gibson himself, and one of the local guys at the pub we drink at remembers seeing it in the corner of his workshop in Lowestoft as a kid and used to sit on it – he (John) was amazed it was still on the road.

“After plying me with a tin or two of braincell-reduction fluid, Fred worked on his sales patter. I went home, and slept on it, but kept thinking of what it could, and should, be. I did try to ignore the emotions it raised in me over the coming weeks, but they kept surfacing, and Fred didn't help by keep mentioning it during, it felt, every conversation. His price wasn't exactly bargain of the week, but me being of a certain age and, therefore, a teenager of the era, it tugged at the old claret-pump strings. To cut a long story short, I finally settled on a price, and the deal was done.

SPEC:
1967 Triumph Tiger 500 engine (modified head, Amal carbs, extended parallel manifolds, aftermarket velocity stacks, high-level exhausts with heat shields, Electrex battery-less ignition, aftermarket kick-start pedal, remote oil filter), 1966 Triumph Tiger 500 frame (modified & moulded), one-off forward hangers/air-scoop, one-off forwards, 21-inch front wheel, unknown drum front brake, single shock girder forks, unknown risers, pull-back straight ’bars, Iron Cross mirror, Sportster tank (modified), unknown chopper seat (painted), unknown rear mudguard (modified), one-off alloy battery/electrics box, aftermarket hexagon oil tank, 16-inch drum brake rear wheel, one-off loom, Bates bottom-mount headlight, aftermarket tail-light

FINISH:
Paint by original builder retouched by owner, ‘flake & lacquer by owner, polishing by owner

ENGINEERING:
Bike rebuilt by owner, frame straightened/new sissy-bar/forward extensions by Chris Sadd Engineering (**01603 414666**)

THANKS TO:
“Fred; & Chris Sadd Engineering…”

“I took it all apart as aoon as I got it home. The frame downtube was, as I said, slightly bent, probably due to a past accident, and that worried me – if it couldn't be straightened the project'd be dead in the water. Luckily, the ever-so-talented Chris Sadd of CS Engineering in Norwich rescued the situation, and we were good to go. I also sketched some drawings, and he made me a sissy-bar in square-section stainless which nicely echoes the girder forks. I didn't want to spend a fortune so I filled holes, repaired the mouldings, derusted and repainted the rear wheel, and did my best to rattle-can the damage to the existing paint, including the pin-stripes, to keep the original look, chucking a bit of holographic glitter over the wet lacquer on certain areas I'd masked off to make it really pop when the sun gets on it.

“I'm over six foot and although the old, raked Tiger frame is small height-wise, it's been stretched and is long in length but, even so, to get it to work for me, Chris had to fabricate triangular extensions on the front of the frame which hold the controls to get my feet in a place where the rear brake and the gear-change can be positioned to suit my build. That also gave me somewhere to attach the front air-scoop, beneath which I placed a remote oil-filter. The run of the ’pipes was good, but I added the leg-shields to stop them burning me, and put little turn-out slip-ons on their ends – they might not be, to some out there, very chopperish, but they work on the engine in an equally rad' kinda way.

“The bike is light, skinny, and good fun to ride. It has the turning circle of the Titanic, but it's fine for the few roundabouts we have where I live. Its finish won't win any prizes, but it's different to everyone else's, and I'm having fun, and I'm just pleased its back on the road after all these years.”

NOBBY
PICS BY **NIK**

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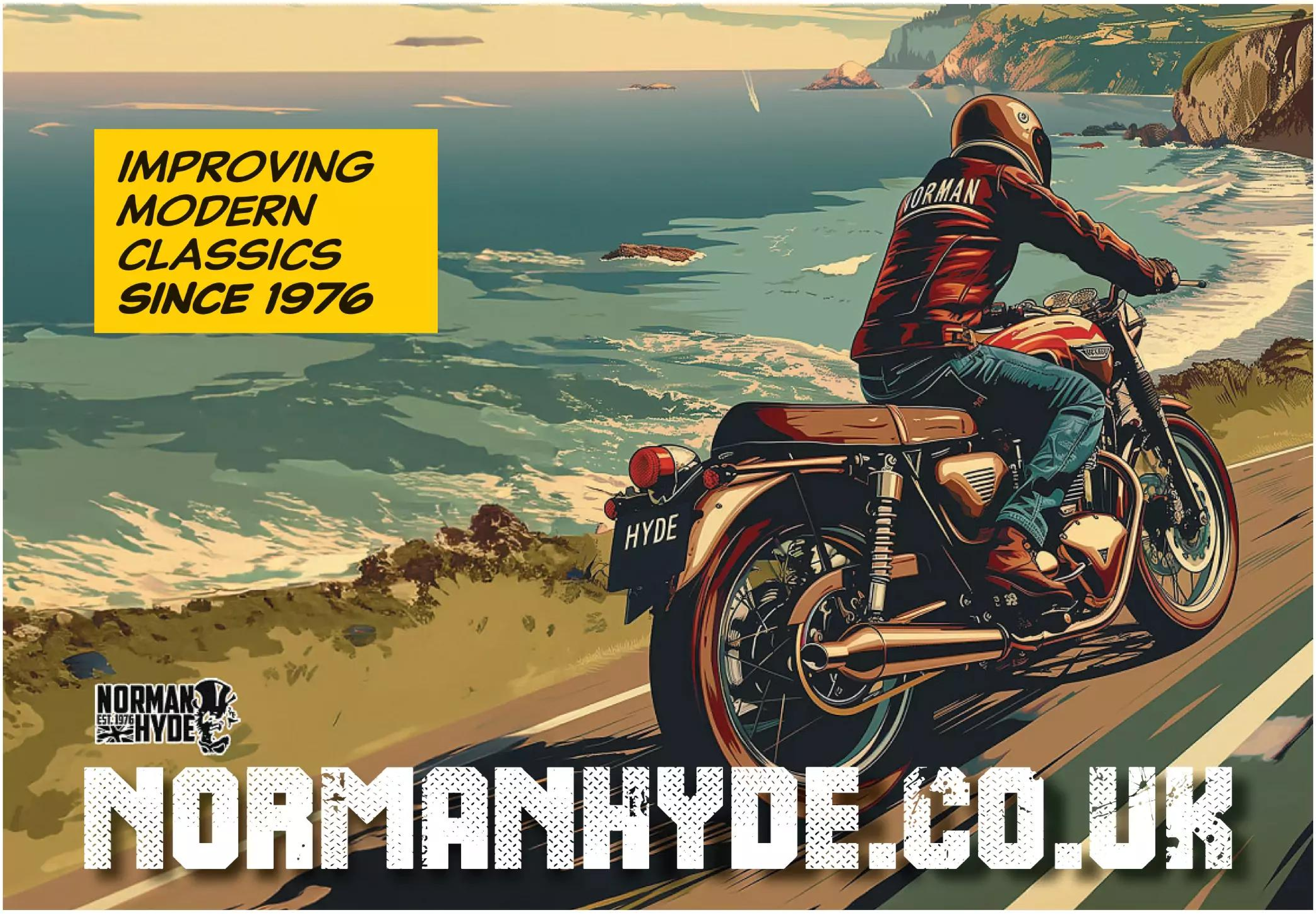


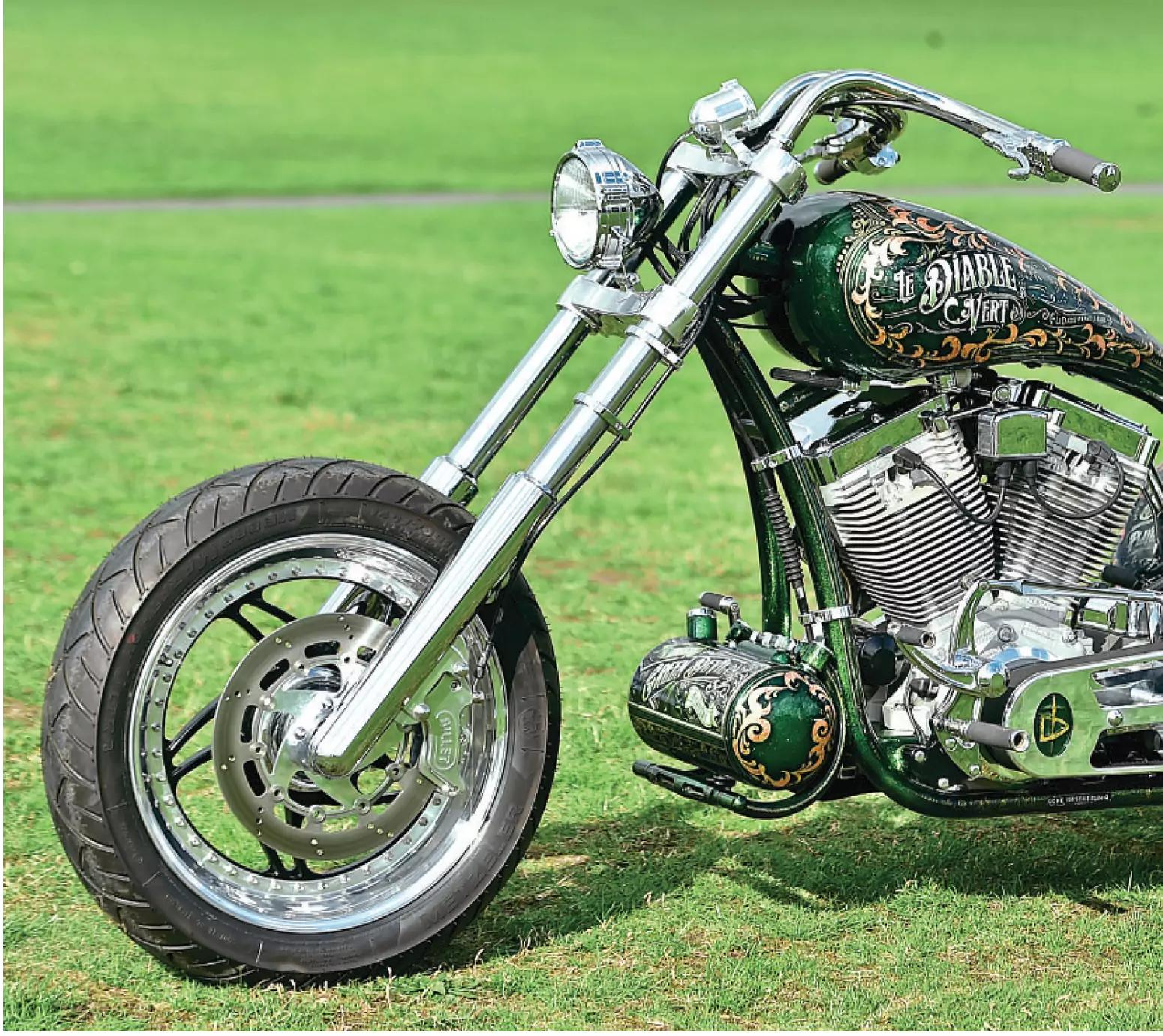
THE DEVIL'S IN THE DETAILS...

ULTRA SPORT
THE DEVILS PLAYGROUND
DIABL
VERT
DESTINY

IT'S BEEN A FEW YEARS SINCE DESTINY CYCLES, VIC AND LIN, HAVE BUILT A TRIKE – THE LAST WAS, I THINK, THE RATHER STUNNING HIGH ROLLER BACK IN 2009. THIS ONE, THOUGH, AS YOU CAN SEE, IS VERY DIFFERENT…

PURE GREEN
THE GREEN DEVIL
DEVILTRY

THE DEVILS PLAYGROUND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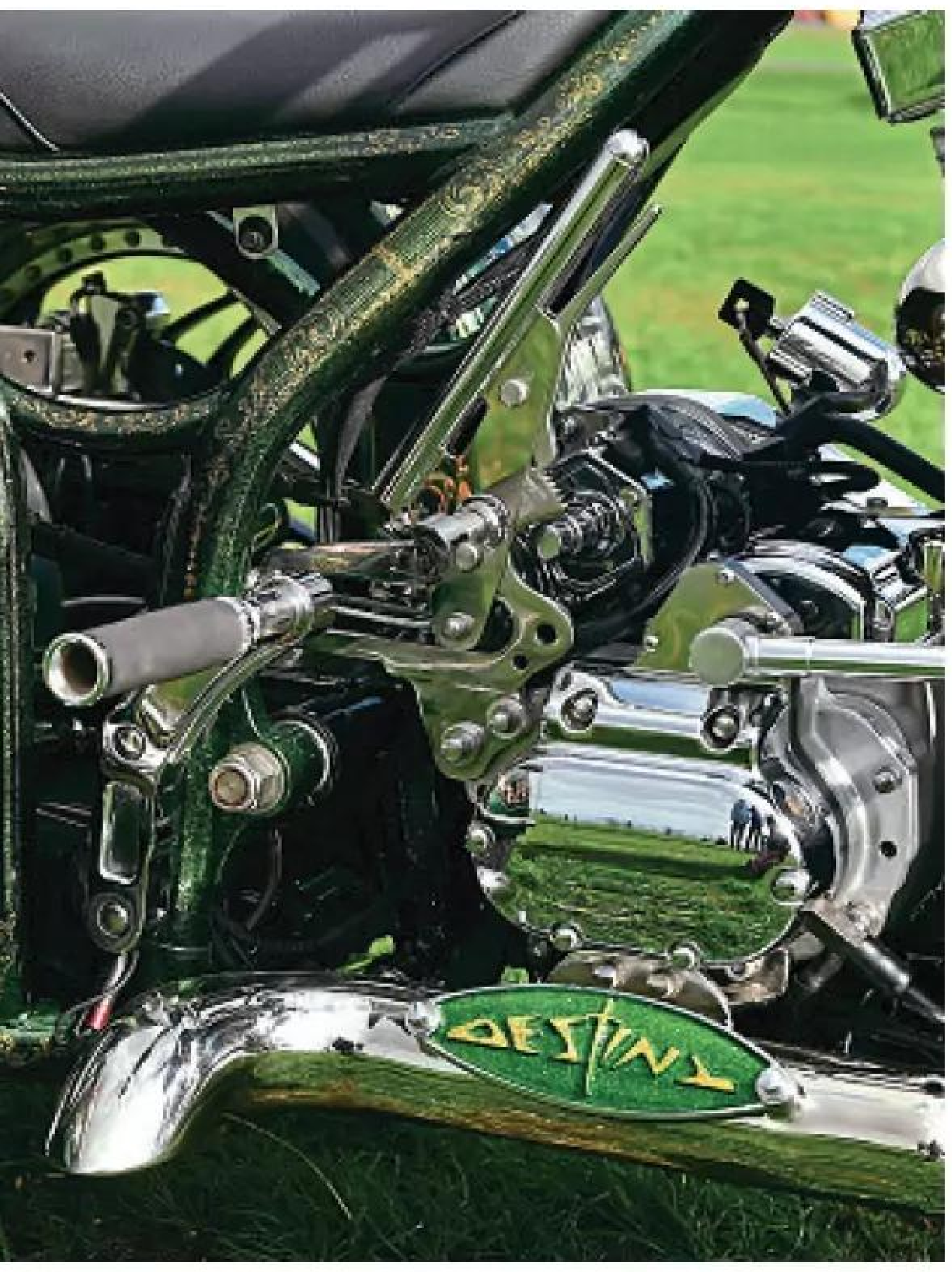
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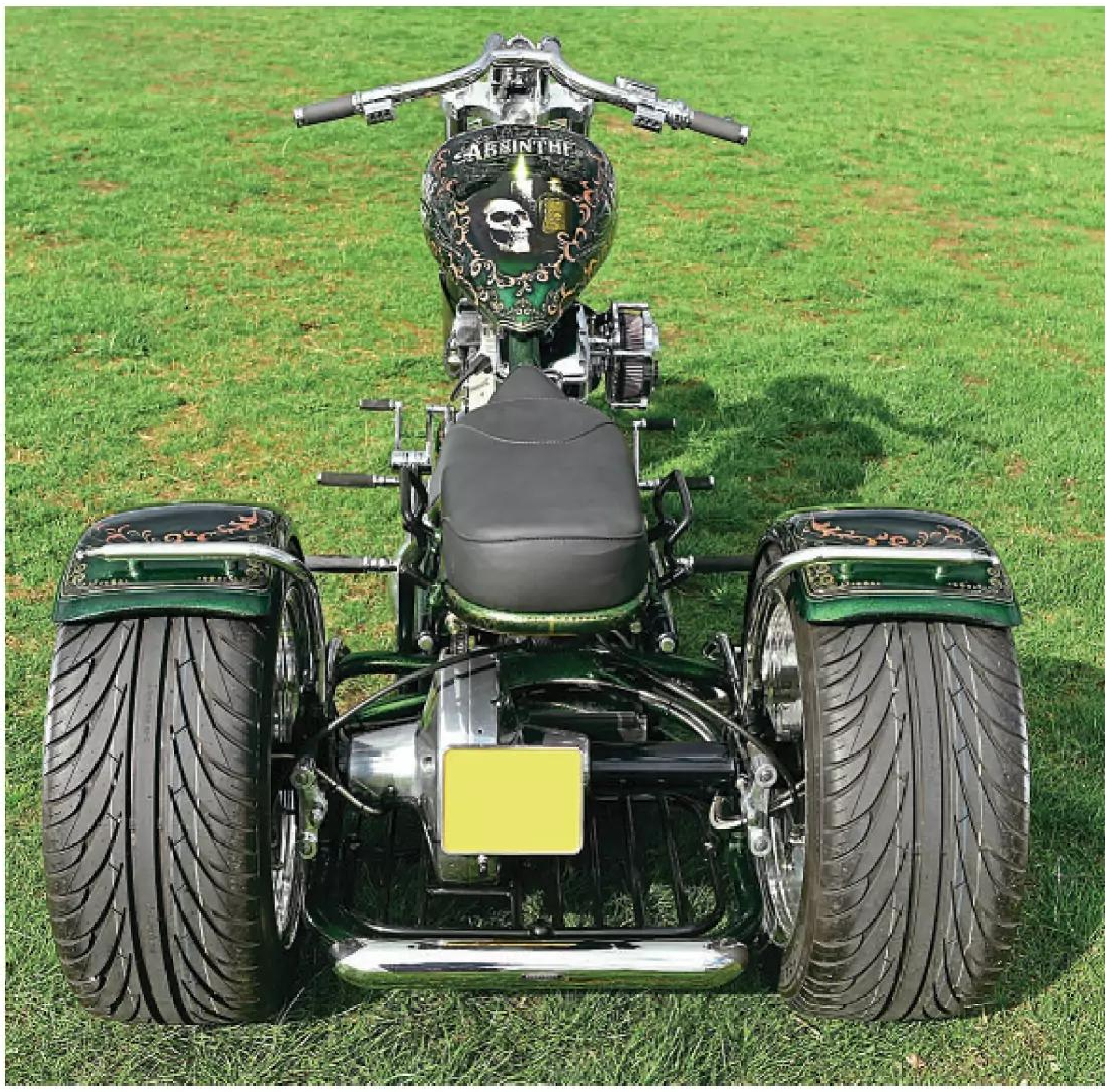
DESTINY CYCLES
Destiny Cycles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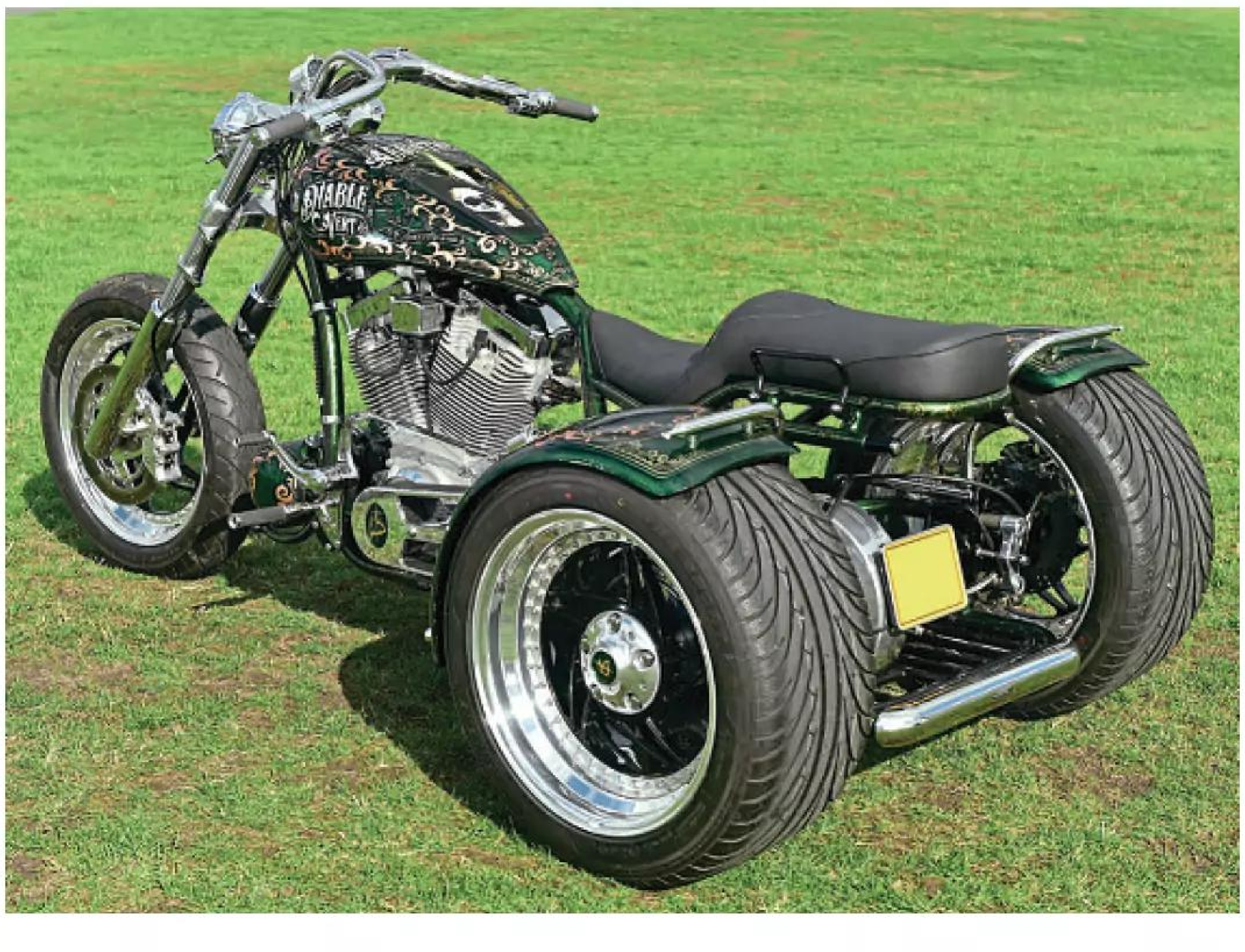
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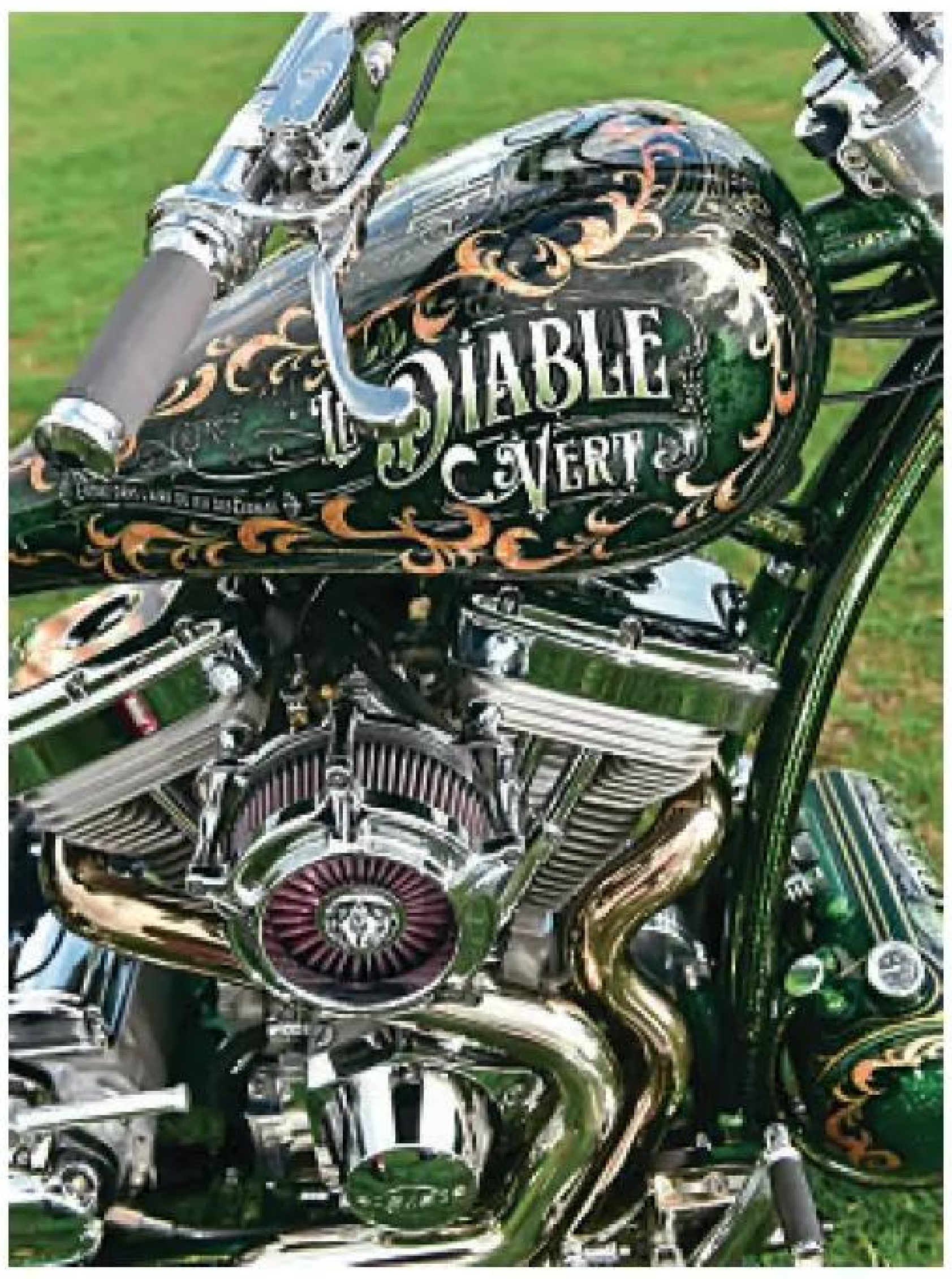
THE DEVIL MADE ME DO IT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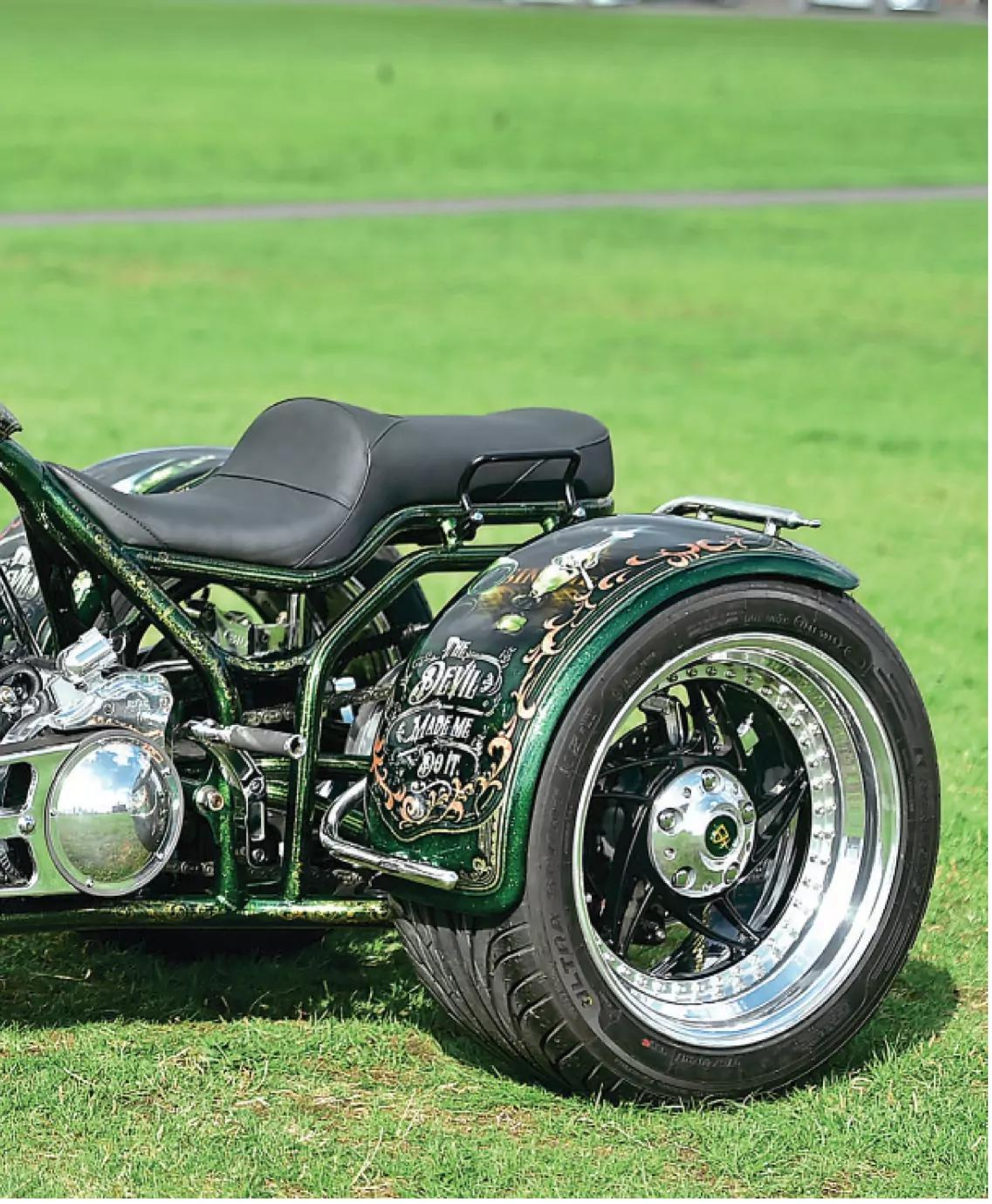

A gentleman by the name of Chris was on holiday somewhere nice and, being a gentleman and therefore having style and panache, had a copy of this 'ere magazine with him because, obviously, that's what gentlemen of style and panache take with them on holiday. Flicking through it, he saw a bike that they'd built and, rather taken with it, he decided there and then that he was going to have them build him a trike – no ifs, no buts, he decided they were doing it. Of course, at this point they didn't know this, but such things're minor problems when you make your mind up about something, aren't they?

Once back in dear old Blighty, he rang them and arranged to pop over from his native Lancashire to see them in Yorkshire to discuss the project. Having them build him a trike might've been an impulsive decision, but that didn't mean he didn't have some very definite ideas of what he wanted, oh no. He'd seen a particular trike in the US and wanted something like it, but in his own/Destiny's style. He and Vic and Lin sat and worked out what exactly the trike was going to consist of/look like, with both parties making suggestions, some of which were taken on board, others weren't.

The basics of the build are as follows: A one-off trike frame made by Vic, using a Zodiac axle set up, suitably modified of course; a 96 (cubic) inch S&S Evo' motor; a set of fat Arless Ness four-inch over forks; and three (obviously) hand-made billet split-rim wheels (a slightly fatter-than-stock 18-inch front, and 10-inch wide 17-inchers at the rear with 275 tyres). That decided, Vic got on with building while Lin started the long process of sourcing all the parts he'd need to create their (well, their's and Chris') shared vision.

To list everything that Vic's done to create this three-wheeled masterpiece would take far more room than we have here but, suffice to say, every single component on it has either been handmade, modified, or sourced from the best suppliers (hence the Harrison Billet calipers and the, sadly no longer available, very neat Trigger handbrake). The tank, the fuel tank, a five-gallon cruiser-style one, for example, was a bought item, but Vic cut and stretched it for a more aesthetically pleasing look, using a flush filler cap that's so flush that, now with the intricateness of the paint (which we'll come to in a moment), it's almost invisible. Similarly, there is a battery n' electrics box cos there has to be, but it's so well concealed that it, too, looks to be conspicuously absent. And, by putting the oil tank out at the front of the frame and making a very definite feature of it, allowed Vic to keep the area under the absolutely factory-looking seat (made by Destiny's seat artistes of choice, Saddlecraft in South Shields) completely empty and uncluttered – something that's really not easy to do.

He handmade the wider-than-stock yokes, and the pull-back 'bars, modified the very chunky Roland Sands Designs headlight to take tiny, but very bright, indicators so as they look as though they're an integral part it, designed by Mr Sands hisself. The chrome cover on the lower rear frame tube is a nice touch, too, looking like a bumper (fender to our colonial cousins – wannabe Americans, please note, this is the correct usage of the word 'fender' – a mudguard is not a fender, okay?) from a fifties car from across The Pond and has a small and but, again, very bright stop/tail-light in it, while the front and rear rails around the mudguards (see?) carry the front marker lights and, on top, very small and subtle, but very bright, and tiny Kellerman 3-in-1 stop, tail, and indicator lights that're so tiny and neat the MSVA man they use, a very experienced gentleman, asked where the rear lights were. The rails also help stabilise the 'guards.

The eagle-eyed amongst you will've noticed the tiny lever atop the RHS of the gearbox – yes, it's to engage the off-the-shelf Zodiac reverse-gear conversion that allows you to have a reverse on your normal five-speed 'box. If you hadn't spotted it, I'm not too surprised as it's easily lost in the acres (in a manner of speaking) of beautifully chromed and polished metal around, the work of Vic and Lin's chromers of choice: Quality Chrome in Hull. Similarly, you may not've noticed the very handy under-axle carrying rack, ideal for stashing stuff on longer trips without spoiling the lines of the trike. It's details like this, and the very neat grab-handles each side of the rear seat for Chris' good lady, that show that, no matter what you might think at first glance, Destiny Cycles' bikes, and trikes, aren't just pure show ponies – they're made to be used, too.

Mind you, looking at the quality of the paint, and of the chrome, too, you could be forgiven for thinking that, you really could. The paint is, of course, the work of Dave Dickinson at DDK Airbrushing, who's worked with Destiny's for a few years now, and was arrived at after Chris saying he wanted a deep green flake like that Stateside trike had. Green made them think of absinthe, the legendary, reputedly hallucinogenic, spirit as a theme, and all was going swimmingly until Chris found out that absinthe, the name, translates as 'La Fee Verte' - 'the green fairy'.

He didn't really want any references to fairies on his trike, so it was decided to translate it as 'the green devil' – much more in keeping, and much more representative of the effect absinthe has, too. Dave took this and, as the old cliché goes, ran with it, and the result is in front of you – quite, quite stunning.

Since the project was begun, Chris's had other vehicles, but they've come and gone. Vic and Lin, though, think the trike's going to be a keeper, as he's, unsurprisingly, absolutely made up with it, and loves the fact that it's really comfortable and easy to ride. He, in turn, would like to say he was very pleased, and somewhat surprised, too, at how easy it was to work with Vic and Lin (well, you know what these artist-types can be like), putting his ideas in alongside their technical and artistic knowhow, to achieve the result you see here in front of you. Vic and Lin'd like to say the same.

NIK
PICS BY **SIMON EVERETT**

SPEC:
S&S 96-inch Evo engine (Super E carb, Roland Sands air-cleaner, BDL 3-inch primary with Destiny Cycles logo milled in cove, one-off stainless 2-into-1 exhaust, Zodiac reverse-gear conversion), one-off trike frame (42-degree rake), Performance Machine forwards/clutch & brake & rear brake master-cylinders/ controls/switchgear/grips, one-off polished billet alloy split-rim wheels (18-inch front/17-inch rears), Harrison Billet calipers (front/rear)/ front discs, Goodridge stainless brake lines (front/ rear), Arlen Ness 49mm 4-inch-over forks, one-off 3-degree rake yokes, one-off stainless 'bars, MMB multi-function 60mm speedo unit, 5-gallon cruiser tank (modified), one-off leather seat, one-off steel rear mudguards, one-off oil tank, one-off hidden battery box, Zodiac chain drive axle (modified), one-off frame work, Progressive Suspension Softail-style rear shocks, 275/45/17 rear tyres, Zodiac rear discs, Wilwood handbrake caliper/stainless lever, minimal loom with Electronik D Box, Roland Sands Designs headlight (modified), Kellerman front indicators/3-in-1 rear lights

FINISH:
All paint & airbrushing by Dave Dickinson at DDK Airbrushing (**01262 490022** or **www.ddkairbrushing.com**), powder-coated wheel centres/rack by Yorvik Engineering Services (**01904 768515** or **www.yorvik-es.co.uk**), polishing by Destiny Cycles, chroming by Quality Chrome (**01482 589838** or **www.qualitychrome.co.uk**)

ENGINEERING:
Trike built & all engineering by Destiny Cycles (**07979 648689** or **www.destinycycles.co.uk**), machining by Woody at Alan Wood Engineering (**07920 817069**), one-off seat by Saddlecraft Seating (**0191 455 6262** or **www.saddlecraft.co.uk**)

THANKS TO:
"DDK Airbrushing; Saddlecraft; Tim at Yorvik Engineering Services; & Woody at AWE…"

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Event

TOMINTOUL MOTORCYCLE GATHERING

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TMG
19

Kawasaki

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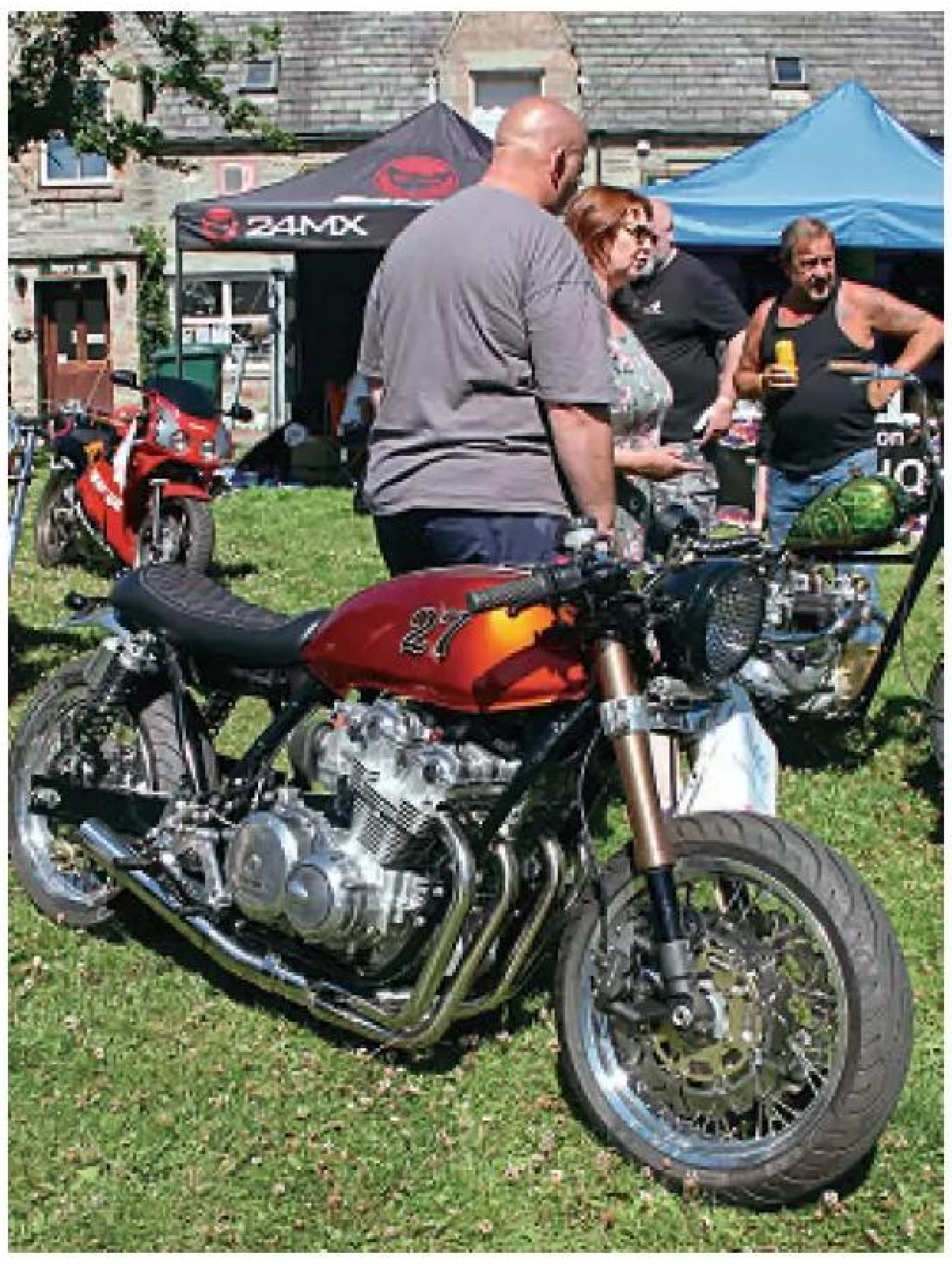
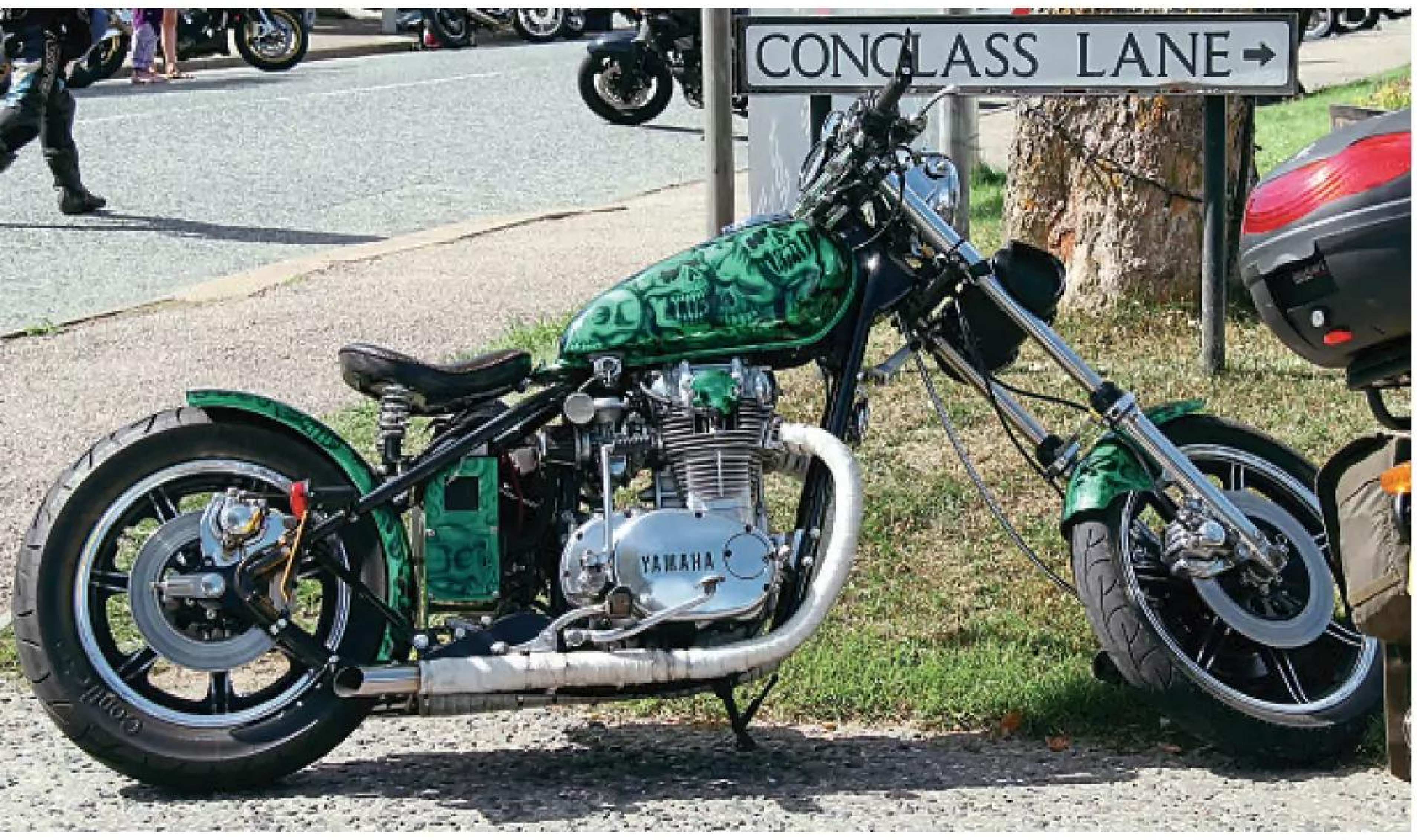
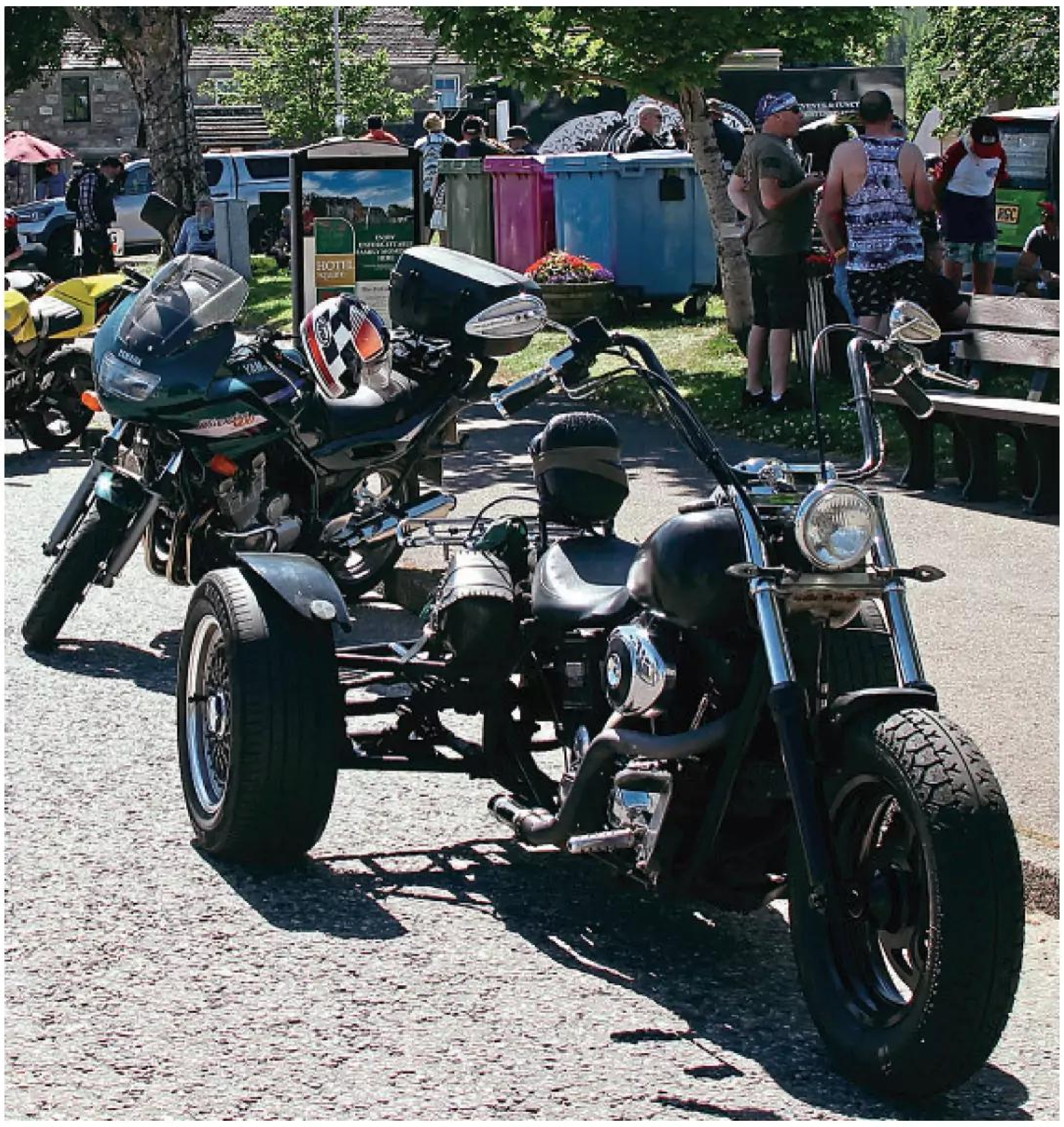
24MX
24MX
Motörhead


24MX
27





It's also home to the Tomintoul Motorcycle Gathering (TMG), an event which began in 2012 as a one-nighter that supported the now defunct Grampian Motorcycle Convention, and developed into an event in its own right as a two-day celebration of biking and rock music. It's a multi-location event, sort o' thing, with camping on the wonderfully-named Cults Drive, bands in the village hall, and the custom bike show on the main road through the village outside the Glenavon Hotel. There's also a ride-out around the local Speyside area on the Saturday – one of the most beautiful areas in the Highlands.

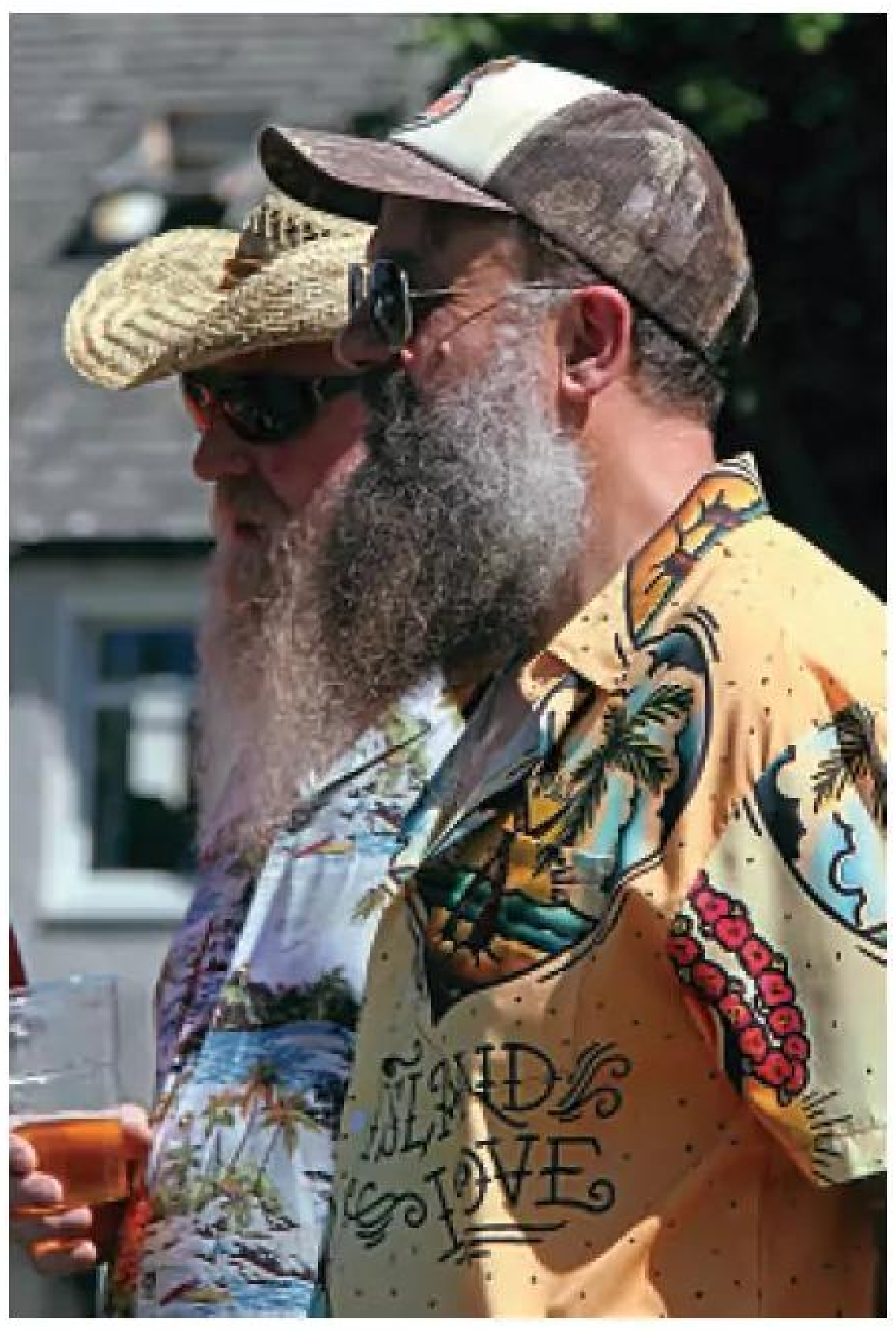
Due to one thing or another I've not managed to do the TMG before, but the village is on one of my favourite rides in the whole of the British Isles (Aviemore along the B970 to Grantown-on-Spey, down the A939 through the snigger-inducing and incredibly tight Bridge of Brown* to Tomintoul, past the equally snigger-inducing Cock Bridge to Braemar, then up over Glenshee to Blairgowrie and down to Perth) so, when the date for the 2025 event was announced earlier in the year, I made plans, arranging the borrowing of a massive (massive!) R18B bagger from BMW – an ideal mile-muncher for the, as it turns out, near on 2,000 mile trip I did.

As is so often the way my life works these days, I didn't make it there until the Saturday, and so, annoyingly, missed the Bon Scott-era Mac/DC tribute band (not a huge fan of Brian Johnson AC/DC, but do love the older Bon Scott stuff), and another band, Slider, too, who played in the village hall. Rolling up mid-morning in blazing sunshine, the custom show area was already packed with people and bikes, and lesser (non-custom, in other words)

*Not a euphemism, but should be

bikes lined both sides of the main street and every available side-street, too, parking wherever they could. Dusty and Marianne, and their usual tribe of friends and customers, were in attendance with their enormous merchandise stand and Dusty, being a gentleman who knows his custom bikes, was judging the bike show, too, alongside Al from Stormin' the Castle and the legendary Malcs. Considering the fact that Tomintoul is, literally, miles from anywhere, there were more than thirty bikes, and trikes, entered, and the three of them really had their work cut out for them. It was a genuine pleasure to wander amongst them, talking to the various folk I'd met before at the Scottish Motorcycle Show, and others I'd not, too. At some point in the afternoon, the prizes were awarded – the trophies for the show were sponsored by the Tomintoul Distillery, who also provided a 'welcome' dram for everyone, and a whisky-tasting stand on the Saturday afternoon, and were beautifully engraved two-handled quaiches (Scottish love or friendship cups). The winners were, in no particular order: Tom Westwater's GSX1400 Katana (Engineering); Calum Cromby's rare RVZ500 Yamaha (Classic); David Gallier's green-and-gold Triumph (Bobber/Chopper); Kirsty Jones' Brabus Turbo trike (Trike/Combo); Euan from Chopper Club Scotland's (Hinckley) Triumph (Custom); Acky's very cool

24MX
THE GLENAVON
WAY IN



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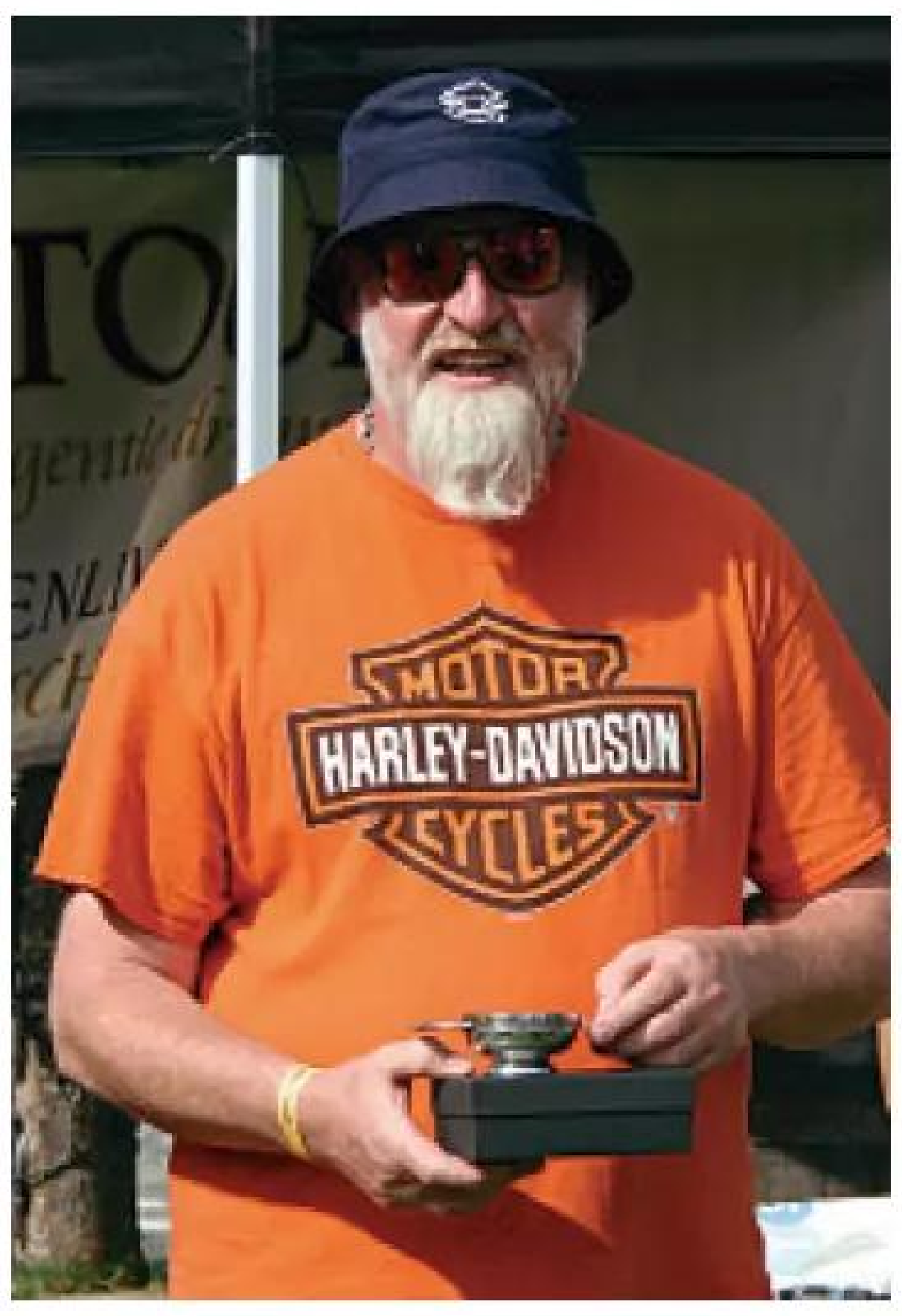

Ironhead (Paint); Scott Wilson's very tough V-Rod (Street Custom); Mick Ellis' GSX-R turbo (Streetfighter/ Performance); organiser Jimmy Chisolm's Norse-themed Harley (Public Choice); and Acky again (Best in Show). Well deserved, all of them.

Also at some point that afternoon the ride-out came back from its tour, organised by Charlie and Jamie, and piped away (well, this is Scotland, isn't it?) by Neil the piper. It had, Jimmy the boss says, left a little late as getting the bikes lined up for it was "like herding cats". Yup, know that feeling.

Apart from being a great party over the weekend, the TMG also raises money for both national and local worthwhile causes, and this year the Highlands And Islands Blood Bikes (HAIBB) were the main recipients with £1,250 being donated on behalf of those who attended and supported TMG 2025, and they also donated money locally as a thank you to the people of Tomintoul for their hospitality.

As is usual, I had to leave before the evening's festivities began because I had an early start from Perth the next morning to get all the way home in the one day, via Workington to photograph Snif's Kawasaki chop, so I missed the Saturday band, the very popular (and very hard-working) FUBAR but, as that meant I got to ride the rest of the route mentioned above in the early evening sunshine, I wasn't going to complain too much, y'know, especially as it turned out the roads were mostly empty and I got to hare the big BMW along at speeds that, probably, weren't strictly legal (or wise, actually) – the perfect end to a perfect day.

The dates for next year's Tomintoul Motorcycle Gathering are 10-12 July, and you can get more info' from the event's Facebook page.

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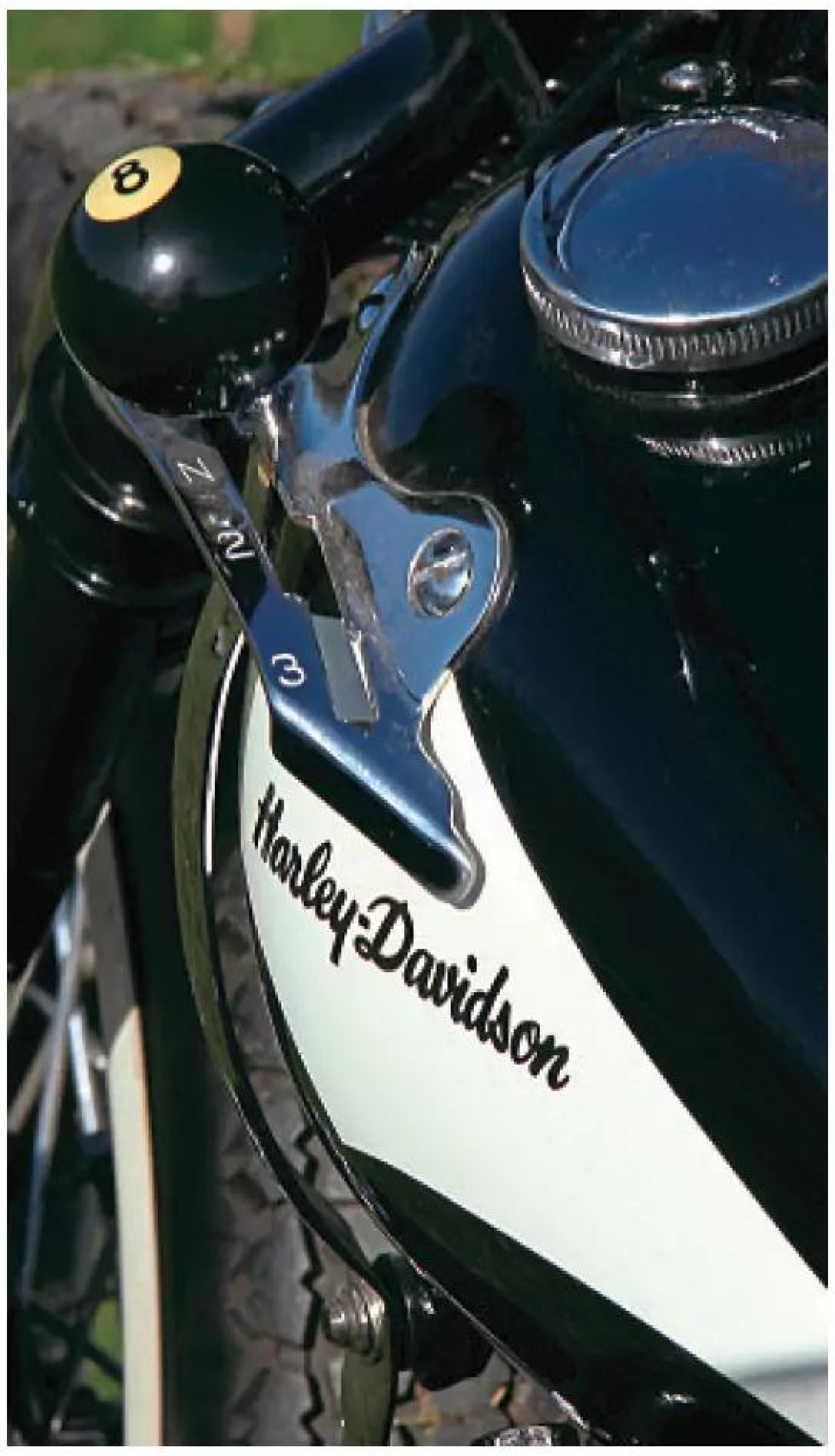
DOING THE RESEARCH FOR THE ARTICLES IN THIS ‘ERE MAGAZINE CAN, AND OFTEN DOES, LEAD YOU DOWN RABBIT HOLES (FIGURATIVELY, NOT LITERALLY – NO RABBIT EVER DUG AN ‘OLE BIG ENOUGH TO GET MY FAT ARSE DOWN IT) THAT TAKE YOU FAR, FAR AWAY FROM WHERE YOU STARTED, AND DOING SOME INNOCENT GOOGLING FOR THINGS RELATED TO STEVE TODD’S GLORIOUS SIDECAR-EQUIPPED H-D 45 IS VERY MUCH A CASE IN POINT.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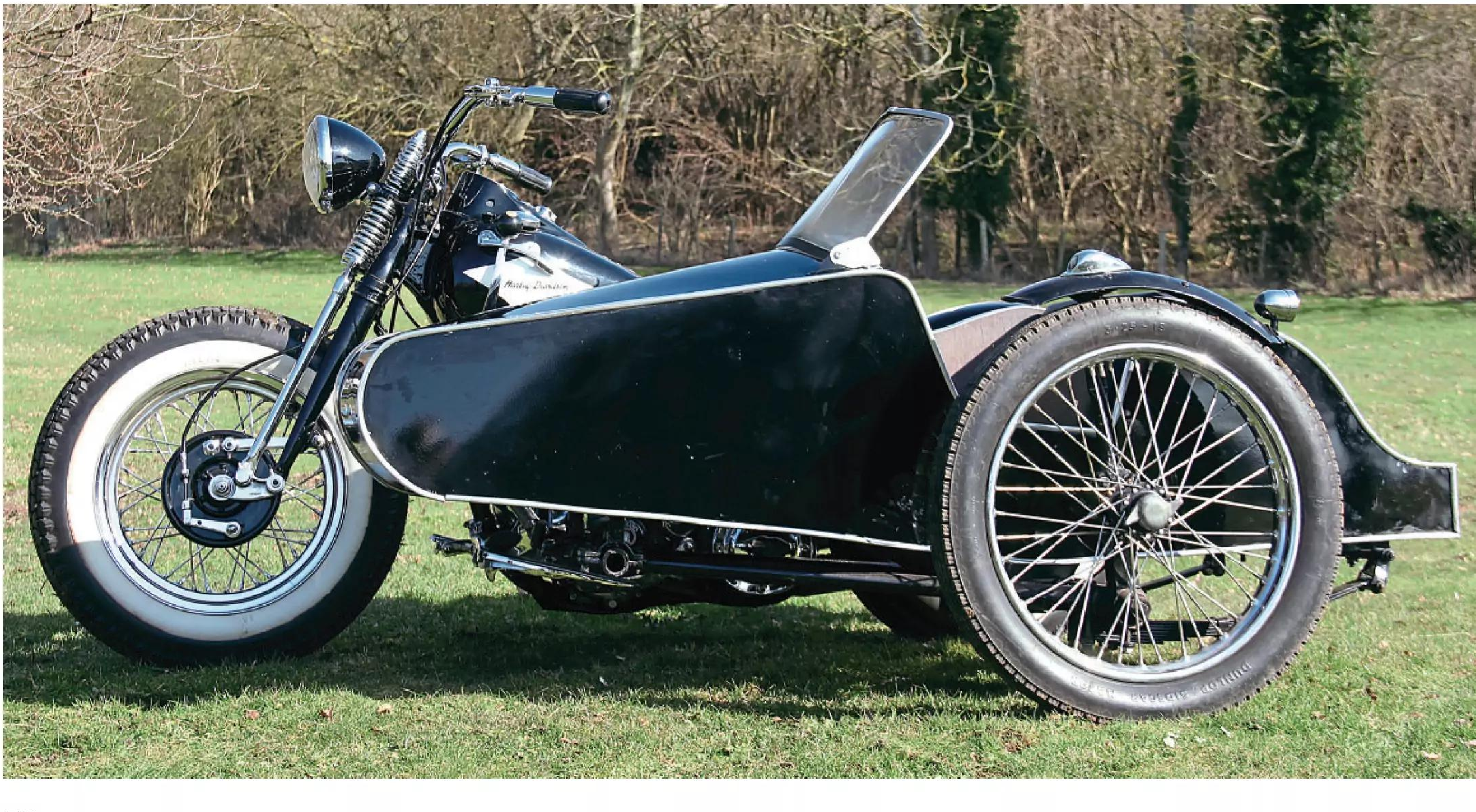
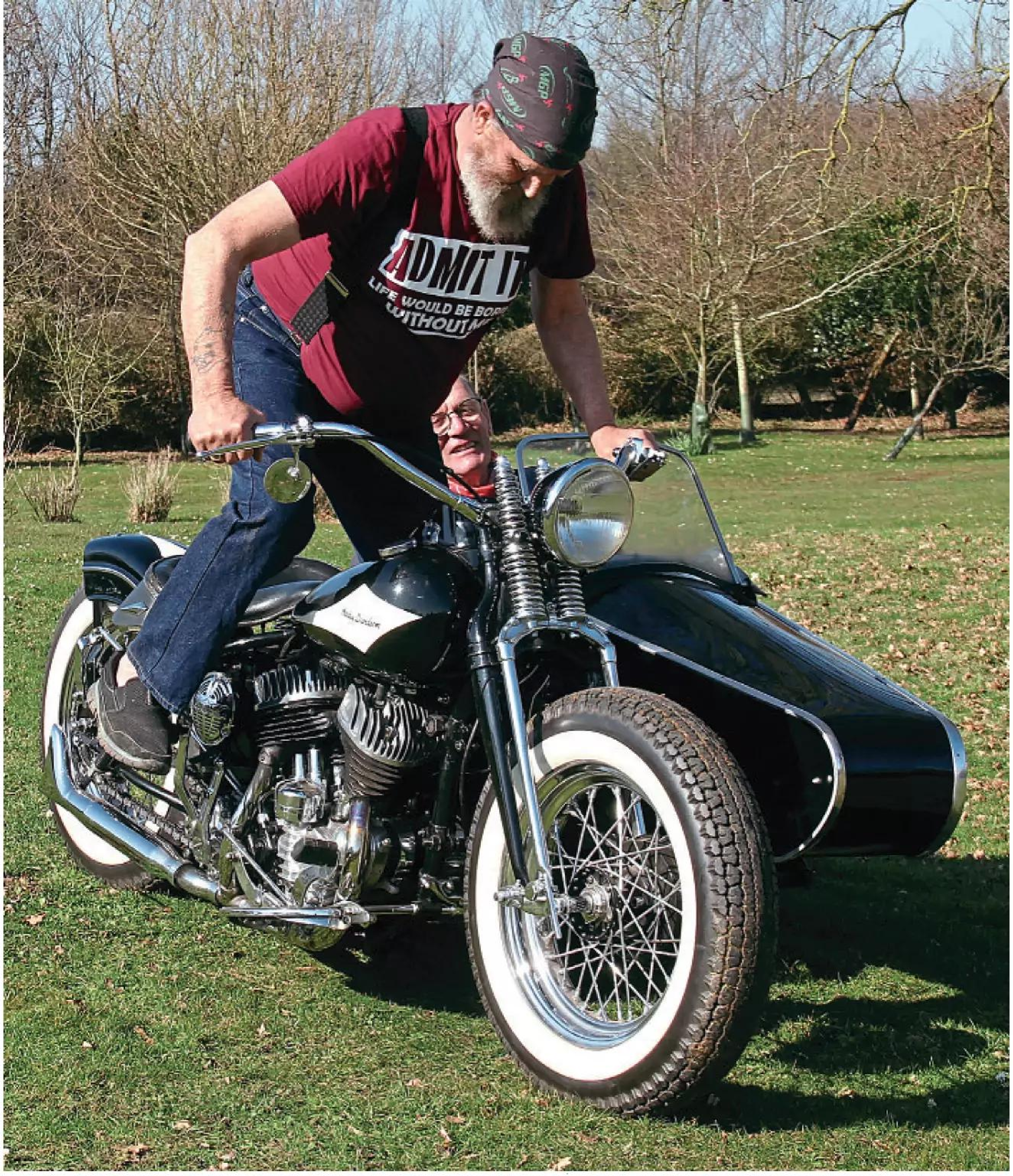

Harley-Davidson

ADMIT IT
LIFE WOULD BE BORING
WITHOUT ME
Harley-Davidson



Did you know, for example, that Jaguar Cars, you know, as in THE Jaguar Cars, grew out of a company that started off making sidecars for motorcycles? No, nor did I. Jaguar Cars, established in 1945, started life as SS Cars, part of the Swallow Sidecar Company, established 1922, who worked in conjunction with the Standard Motor Company, making car bodies. Many sold under the Jaguar name until SS was rebranded (somewhat unsurprisingly) at the end of the Second World War. Amazing what you learn down rabbit holes, isn't it, other than the fact that rabbit shit's really difficult to get out of the knees of your jeans.

Steve Todd, the owner of this 'ere sidecar outfit is, you could say, something of a legendary figure on the East Anglian motorcycle scene. Now, I don't really like using the word 'legendary' to describe living people cos, in my head, the word has the traditional meaning of a story that's not necessarily true (like the legend of King Arthur, or St Patrick banishing the snakes from Ireland) but, these days, it's come, thanks to our colonial cousins far across the sea, to mean a person worthy of note and, like the equally re-meaninged ( ) 'awesome', has become so over-used to be almost meaningless; anyone doing anything, no matter how trivial, can be so described – if someone buys you a pint, they're 'a legend' according to popular parlance. Steve, however, does deserve the accolade though; a right-hand sidecar grass-track racer of some repute, he won the South Midland Centre Championship in 1970; the South Eastern Centre Championship in 1973; the Lydden International in 1971, 1972 and 1973; and was third in the British Championship in 1973. He's also raced, and won, in both scrambles and motocross, and in trials, too, on outfits, and has a list as long as your arm of bikes he's fitted chairs to, including Vespas, Honda Cubs, Ariel Aces, Harleys, Indians, BSAs, Triumphs, and Nortons both military spec and civilian. These days he provides the premises for the well-attended Walden Bikers meet-ups at his home near Newport in Essex, on the old A11 between Saffron Walden and Bishops Stortford, where he has a small, but jam-packed, motorcycle museum housing his collection of bikes, and a great big field for him to mess around on them in – an idyllic way to live out his retirement years in my book.

Anyway, he bought the bike that was to be the basis of the outfit you see here from a gentleman by the name of Calvin at the Goodwood Festival of Speed a good few years ago after he fell in love with it there. It was a restored/partly customised 1942 model, probably a civilianised WLA that'd been rebuilt to a very high standard and looks, to the unenlightened eye, to be a standard bike with nice paint and chrome.

Those who know 45s, though (and idiots like me who spent an eternity online trying to find a picture of a stock non-military-spec one – a mammoth job, I can tell you), can see that it's got a later seat, probably from a Panhead; later foot-boards and rear brake lever; probably a repro' dash with a different clock (speedo) facia; different (higher and wider) 'bars; the small metal plate behind the headlight removed; the rear mudguard cut down (bobbed); and the front removed entirely. It also has a hand-clutch as well as foot one, courtesy of Steve, and it was also he who took the front mudguard off, partly cos it looks so, so much better without it, and partly because he had another use for it, but we'll come to that in a moment.

The bike spent the first ten years of his ownership upstairs in his private museum but then, fairly recently, he decided it needed a chair, as he does with a lot of stuff, and enlisted a team of willing (mostly) volunteers to bring it down the steep flight of stairs it'd gone up a decade or so before. "It wiped its bum on the carpet on the way down," he laughs, "but the wife just shrugged and got out the brake cleaner." She's probably quite used to it, Steve, with all the toys you have.

He'd managed to pick up a rare, old Swallow Sidecars sidecar (there's the link to the waffling about Jaguar Cars, if you were wondering) in amazing condition, and also a sidecar designed for a 45, but opted to use the Swallow body on the 45 chassis cos the Swallow looked better. Thankfully, neither required too much modification to be made to fit together, and now look as though they were made for each other. He doesn't know what year the Swallow body is from but, seeing as how Swallow themselves, as far as I can ascertain, stopped making sidecar bodies to concentrate on car bodies in 1927, it's either more than 100 years old or very close to anyway. He stripped, smoothed and painted it (well, his good friend Andy actually did the painting), and repolished all the alloy trims, and also cut down that front muddie from the bike to go above the sidecar wheel. See? Told you we'd come back to that in a moment, didn't I?

The now-perfect Flattie takes pride of place in his garage-cum-workshop, and gets used on bright and sunny days as and when. I was privileged to get to start and ride it across the field to the photoshoot location, and it started as easily as any 83-year-old motorcycle ever does (couple o' kicks to get the fuel through, three or four to start it) and, once warmed up, burbled away nicely. Steve's good mate Roger was there on the day, too, and, as he was recovering from surgery on his foot (or something – neither Steve or I can remember quite what), Steve let him ride the outfit for the photos, while he went in the chair… and yes, okay, cos he's too tall to go in the chair, too – people weren't as big in them days as we are now, and the little Swallow sidecar's exactly that: little.

NIK

SPEC:
1942 Harley-Davidson Flathead 45 (cubic inch, 740cc) side-valve engine (restored/rebuilt, hand-clutch conversion, aftermarket fishtail silencer)/frame/front end (mudguard removed)/headlight/fuel tank/dash (modified)/oil tank/rear end/rear mudguard (modified), later H-D foot-boards/rear brake pedal, aftermarket 'bars, later H-D seat, one-off side-mount 'plate, aftermarket rear light, Swallow sidecar (modified), H-D 45 sidecar chassis (modified)

FINISH:
Black & white bike paint by original builder, sidecar black by Andy, polished sidecar trims by owner

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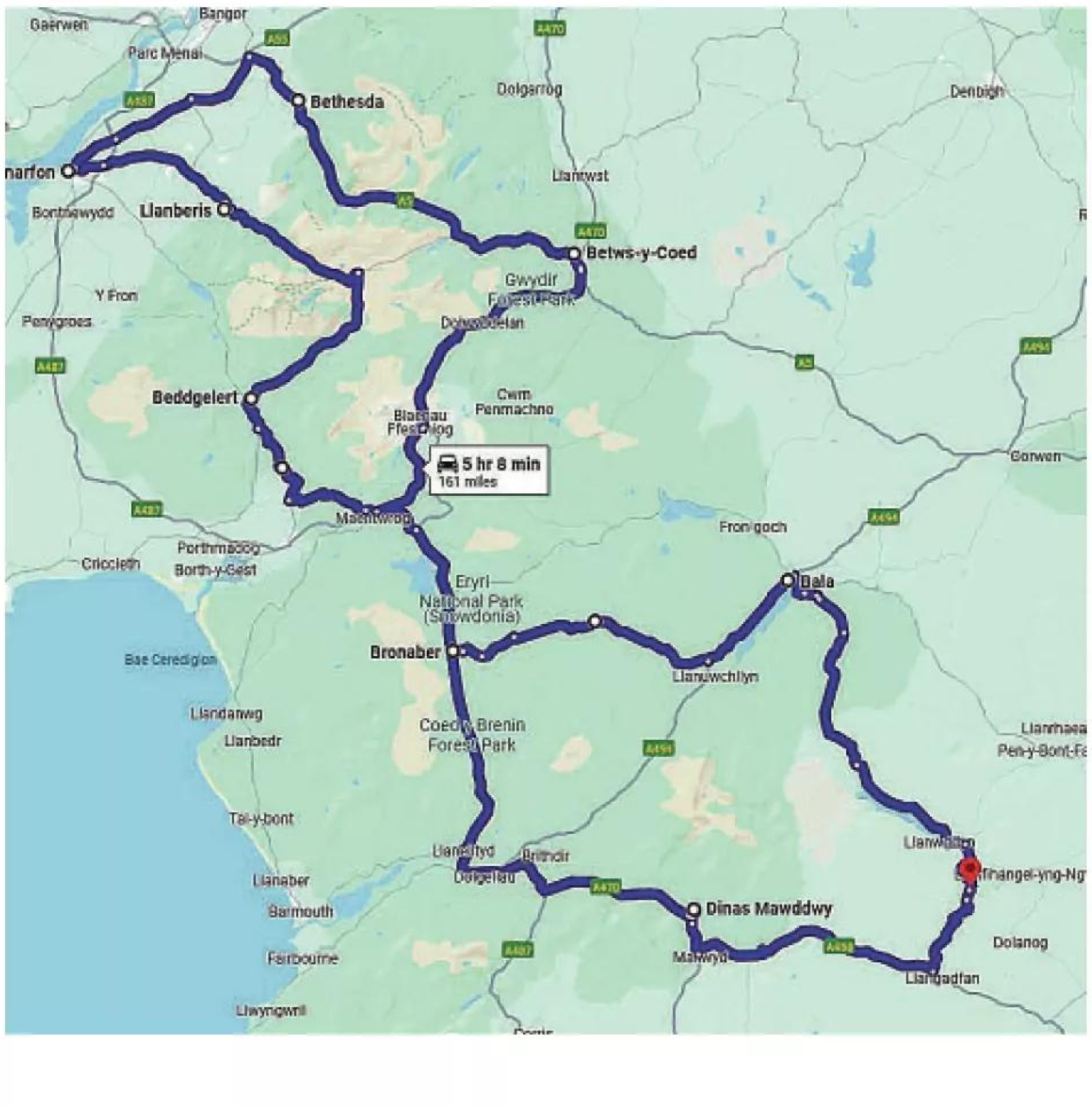
The first cattle grid of the day – bit shaky on a hardtail

BANDITS 'CROSS THE BORDER

A COUPLE OF YEARS BACK, MESELF AND THE GOOD LADY WORKED OUT A PLAN TO HAVE A FEW DAYS IN WALES RIDING FAMOUS ROADS LIKE THE ELAN VALLEY AND THE B4574 DEVIL'S BRIDGE ROAD, ABOARD A COUPLE OF PRESS TEST BIKES – A PLAN THAT DIDN'T GO QUITE AS PLANNED DUE TO ONE OF THEM DECIDING IT DIDN'T WANT TO MAKE THE TRIP, REQUIRING HER TO GO ON HER RUST-PAINT HORNET, BUT IT WAS FUN ANYWAY.

This year, as she had some time off in July, we decided to go back and, this time, ride a route I'd found somewhere on Facebook – a double loop, north and south, starting from Bronaber just south of Snowdonia National Park. We decided that, on this trip, we'd just do the northern loop because, while the whole thing, both north and south loops, is reckoned to only be 161 miles, and doable in just over five hours if you pull yer finger out, the constant stopping to take photos in scenic places,

BELOW: The route – we just did the top loop this time


Bangor
Bethesda
Llanberis
Betws-y-Coed
Beddgelert
Blaenau Ffestiniog
5 hr 8 min
161 miles
Maentwrog
Eryri National Park (Snowdonia)
Bronaber
Bala
Llanuwchllyn
Coed y Brenin Forest Park
Dolgellau
Dinas Mawddwy
Llangadfan
Criccieth
Porthmadog
Barmouth
Penygroes
Dolgarrog
Denbigh
Corwen
Frongoch

lunch, coffee stops n' stuff takes far, far longer. We also decided we'd start (and end) in Bala because that wasn't too far from where we were staying at the Holly Lodge Hikers & Bikers Getaway just outside the utterly unpronounceable village of Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant, home of the famous Pistyll Rhaeadr waterfall.

The plan also this year was to forego the reliability of brand-spanking test bikes, and take our Bandits – my now-no-longer silly-sider, and her lil' black (hardtail) chop. "Are you going to be okay on the hardtail?" I asked. "I'm sure I'll be fine," she said, "and I can always steal your bike, cos it's got suspension, if it gets too much for me." Right then. Neither of us being great fans of monotonous hours along boring motorways, we put both of them (thankfully they're both quite physically small) in the van, and drove to the idyllic hideaway that is Holly Lodge in relative comfort, unloaded them there, and parked the van where it wouldn't be in anyone's way for the next few days.

The next morning, having looked at various maps, we set off for Bala and, having turned off before we got to Bala itself to ride down the east side of the lake, found our way to the bottom of the unlisted and very (VERY!) wiggly road that ran across to the A470 at Bronaber. Heading along the first mile or three of it, we came to a closed gate. Hmm. I pulled out me phone to check the sat-nav and found that, yes, we had to go through that gate. Okay then. With Pam looking at me slightly worryingly, we got through and set off on what I soon found was one of the best roads I've ever ridden. It's not fast, at all; in fact, it's second and third gear, occasionally (rarely!) fourth on a 600 Bandit, and I think we had to stop to open and close five gates in all. It was barely a car-width wide (thankfully, we didn't meet any), and was booby-trapped with snoozing sheep, but riding along it in blazing sunshine, the exhausts of both bikes blaring off the hills and valleys, was heavenly, and I was almost disappointed when, all too soon, we arrived at the other end, turned right on to the 470 and started north.

The taste of things, scenery mainly, to come..

That first gate...

The absolutely wonderful road-with-no-name

ROYAL OAK HOTEL
ROYAL OAK

Lunch in Betsy…

Far end of Llyn Ogwen

BEDDGELERT
SYGUN

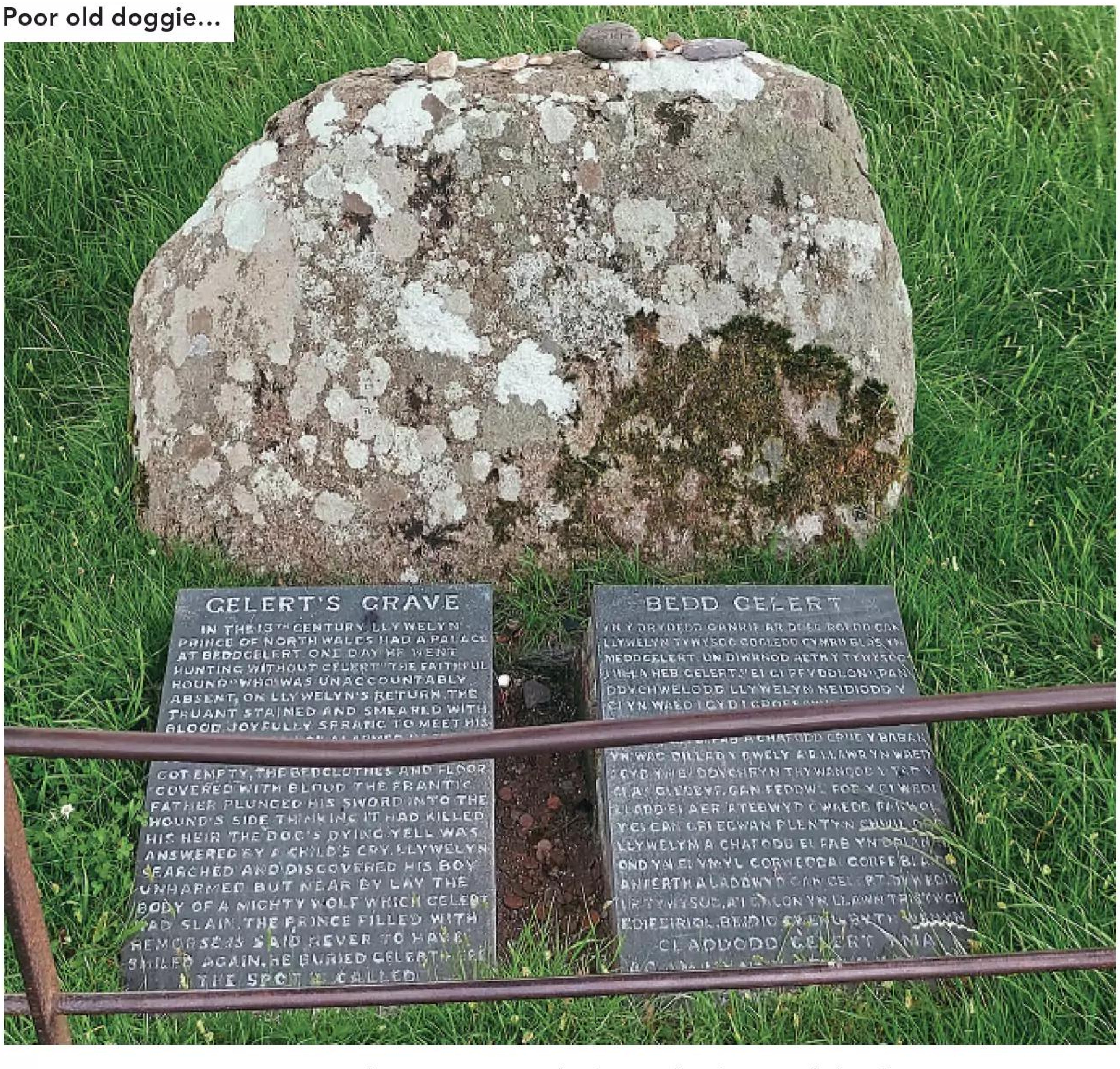
Parked (probably illegally) in Beddgelert

Blummin' immigrants!

The A470 is Wales' longest road at 186 miles, and links the capital, Cardiff, on the south coast, with Llandudno on the north coast and, if you get your timings wrong, can be a total nightmare of crawling along behind slow-moving lorries and/or tractors/those who get a nose-bleed at anything over 45mph. That day, though, we had none of that and, what's more, it looked as though a lot of it'd been recently (very in some places) been resurfaced. The section from Blaenau Ffestiniog to Betwys-y-Coed in particular was warm, sticky, empty bliss, and we just swept through bend after bend at between 80 and 85mph (that's 55 to 60mph obviously, officer) in almost perfect synchronicity, the two bikes equally powered, for what felt like forever, and when we stopped for fuel and then lunch in Betsy (as the Welsh don't call it) Pam's face was lit up like a Roman candle. "That was bloody brilliant!" she said. "You know when you see the bikes all in line piling into bends on Moto GP? It felt like that! Can we do it again?"

After lunch in the slightly-posh-for-us Royal Oak Hotel, we set off again up the A470 briefly, before turning left on to the A5 and heading up it, past the Swallow Falls Inn (often a Dragon Rally meeting point), towards Capel Curig and Bethesda, stopping at the very scenic Llyn Ogwen before heading down the twisty, wooded section that runs alongside the Afon Ogwen, another wonderfully scenic ride, before hitting the A55 North Wales Expressway and turning left for Caernarfon.

Caernarfon Castle

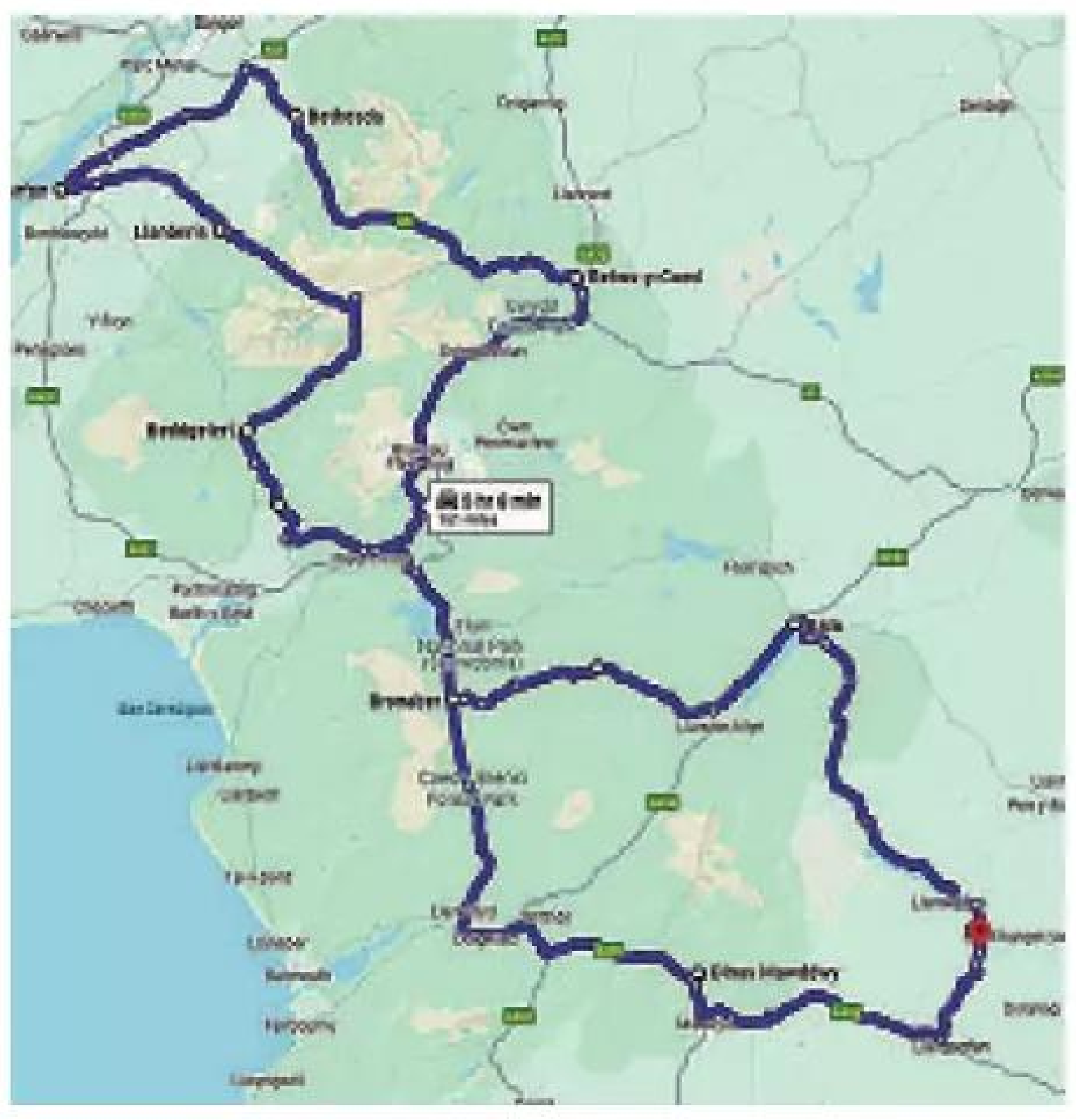

GELERT'S GRAVE
IN THE 13TH CENTURY LLYWELYN
PRINCE OF NORTH WALES HAD A PALACE
AT BEDDGELERT. ONE DAY HE WENT
HUNTING WITHOUT GELERT "THE FAITHFUL
HOUND" WHO WAS UNACCOUNTABLY
ABSENT. ON LLYWELYN'S RETURN THE
TRUANT STAINED AND SMEARED WITH
BLOOD JOYFULLY SPRANG TO MEET HIS
COT EMPTY, THE BEDCLOTHES AND FLOOR
COVERED WITH BLOOD. THE FRANTIC
FATHER PLUNGED HIS SWORD INTO THE
HOUND'S SIDE THINKING IT HAD KILLED
HIS HEIR. THE DOG'S DYING YELL WAS
ANSWERED BY A CHILD'S CRY. LLYWELYN
SEARCHED AND DISCOVERED HIS BOY
UNHARMED BUT NEAR BY LAY THE
BODY OF A MIGHTY WOLF WHICH GELERT
HAD SLAIN. THE PRINCE FILLED WITH
REMORSE IS SAID NEVER TO HAVE
SMILED AGAIN. HE BURIED GELERT HERE
THE SPOT IS CALLED
BEDD GELERT
CLADDODD GELERT YMA

Poor old doggie…

Not wanting to pay the £14.50 (each) fee to look round the famous castle, we had a brew and a bit o' cake in an almost empty teashop down by the harbour, and then split, following the A4085 through a series of unpronounceably-named (well, except for Salem) villages to Beddgelert (or Beth-gelert as it's usually said). It's a beautiful, if very touristy, village that we've been to before, having stayed at a friend's guesthouse a few years ago there (and won a bottle of wine in a pub quiz we hadn't actually entered – long story…), and it's always worth parking up and walking round. We went for a wander down by the river, past the amazing carved dragon (which does, I have to say, look a lot more Chinese than Welsh – I dunno, bloody China, coming over 'ere, taking our dragons), and went in search of the grave of the famous Gelert who, oddly, the village isn't named after. Walking across the meadow to it, we were swooped by an enormous RAF transport plane coming in low behind us, so low that we could see the guys in the back standing with the tail-lift open, hanging on to straps, waving at us. Sadly, as the wind was blowing against us, we didn't hear it coming and so didn't get a picture – shame, cos I reckon I could've got the smiles on all their faces.

Anyway, the afternoon was getting on now, and the temperature starting to drop, and we still had a good run to get back to our haven in the hills, so we set off down the A498 into the woods beside the river before taking a left on to the splendidly winding A4085 for, again, what felt like an eternity before we got to the A487 that leads to the A470, but not before passing The Eating Gorilla… no, I have no idea what that is either. I mean, I didn't see a large, hungry primate I have to admit, but that didn't mean it wasn't there.

Soon we were on to the A4212 heading for Bala, both of us pretty tired. We were cautious along there cos I got three points off an almost hidden camera somewhere in 2023, but it wasn't too long before we were through Bala and on to the B4391 that'd take us back to Llanreh… Llanrah… Llanhead… Holly Lodge. We rolled into our temporary home nine hours after we'd left that morning, having had an absolutely perfect day, and, as we parked the bikes in the Lodge's lean-to and silence, bar (or should that be 'baa'?) the bleating of far-off sheep, descended on the hills once again, I asked Pam how she'd fared after a long, long day on a hardtail? "Not bad," she said with a smile, "but my clutch hand's a bit sore since Mutley (without asking) adjusted my clutch at Meldreth the other day… 'part from that, fine." Well-meaning friends, eh?



Huge thanks to Sue and Bill at Holly Lodge (**07821 305570** or Facebook) for having us back again, and allowing us to dump the van there while we were out playing. Can we come back again when do the other loop, please?

NIK

IMMORTAL
WELL... SO FAR
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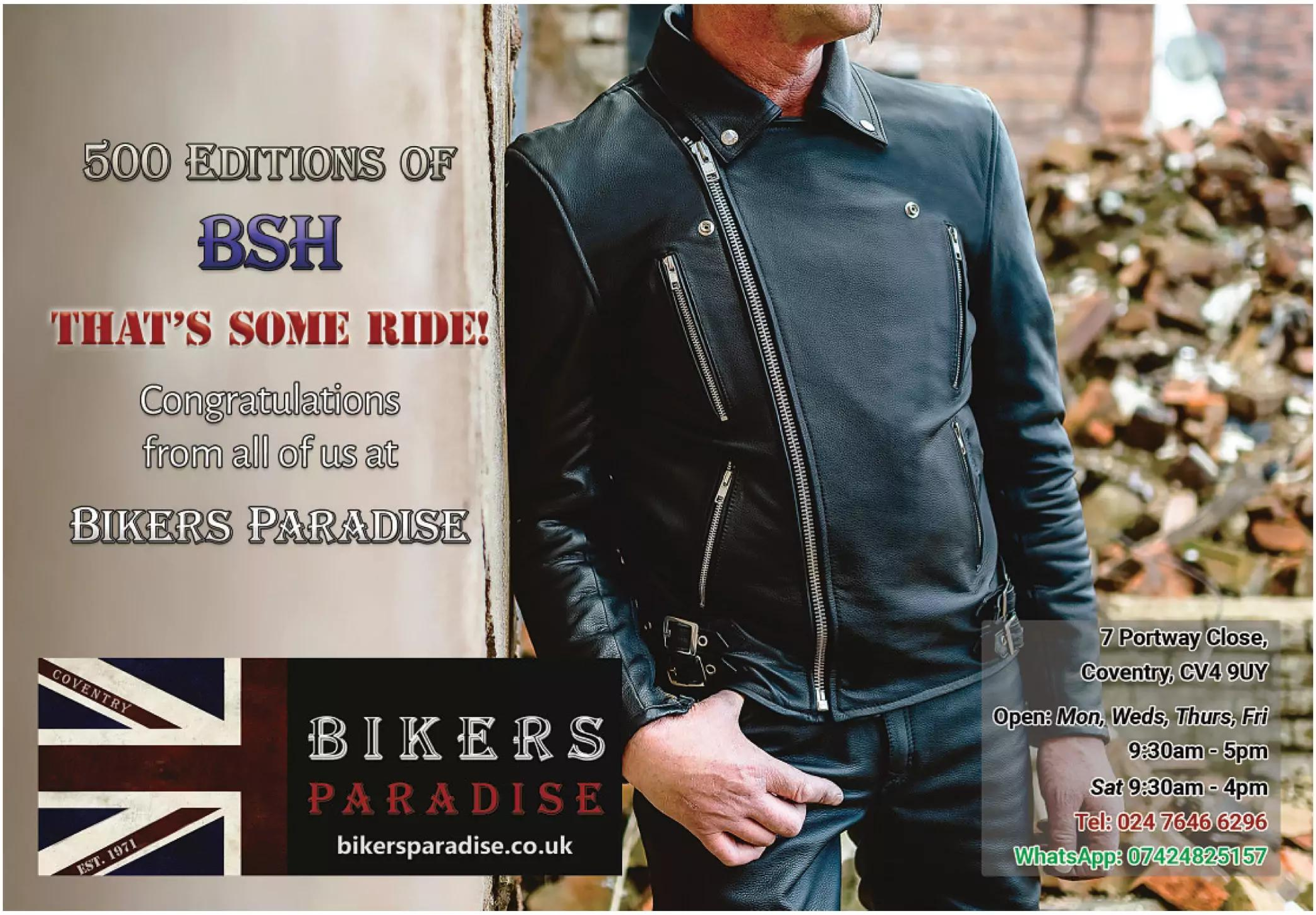
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Event

RAT & SURVIVAL

SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO MAKE HARD DECISIONS IN LIFE – DECISIONS THAT'RE A LITTLE SCARY, THAT KEEP YOU AWAKE AT NIGHT, THAT MAKE YOU WONDER WHETHER YOU'RE DOING THE RIGHT THING…

JUST RIDE IT DON'T SHINE IT
DARE TO BE DIFFERENT
IF IT'S SUNNY I RIDE IF IT RAINS I DRINK BEER
IN RUST WE TRUST

For the last few years, the Rat & Survival Bike & Trike Show, to give its full name, has been held at the Ogri MCC clubhouse at Kemble Airfield near Cirencester in Gloucestershire, and it's been an absolutely brilliant place to do it – the clubhouse has a stage with lights, an excellent bar, proper toilets and showers, plenty of seating, an outside area with shelter and a large fire-pit, and the Ogri lot are just cool people (and very tolerant of weirdoes on matt black bikes). After the retirement from the scene of my preferred caterer, I found a new and excellent one, Goody's Bakery, and everything was going swimmingly. Then, last year, there was an influx of people on stock motorcycles and us lot, the rat hardcore who'd been there all along, were suddenly more than a little lost among them. Now, I'd like to think the reason was that all these people were, whether they rode them or not, into rats and'd heard that the Rat Show was a really good party, but I suspect the truth was that they'd heard that the Ogri's site was a cool place for a party and were coming for that reason and that reason alone – nothing to do with rats. This was illustrated when a group of them were heard to say something along the lines of: "There're a lot of black bikes here, aren't there?" Well, yes, there would be, wouldn't there, given that you've come to an event called the Rat & Survival Bike & Trike Show?

So that was it, it was time to move. The Rat Show is, traditionally, one of the more mobile of events (it started in Derbyshire, moved to Surrey, then to just outside Cambridge, then to Huntingdon, to Notts, then Derbyshire again, then Ipswich, and Bury St Edmunds, before moving to the Ogri's (with spin-offs in Droitwich and Wisbech, too), and ratters're restless souls, so another move wasn't really an issue. A couple of venues were considered but, in the end, I was persuaded to move it back to the site near Ipswich (which it'd outgrown a few years before), albeit on a much reduced scale. This time it was going to be invite-only, just word-of-mouth, no advertising outside us lot. I made our… well, my, apologies to the entirely blameless Ogri, and that was that – the biggest rat event in the world suddenly became probably the smallest.

The idea, if you like, was to make it a more intimate (that sounds as dodgy as hell, doesn't it? I mean, I like the rat lot, but not THAT much…), a lot smaller, a lot less… well, rally really – just us lot, a pub, a fire, a (rat) bike show – no bands, no music, no games, no nothing. Would it work? That I couldn't know until the weekend. I assured the landlord of the pub that there'd be enough there to make it worth his while, with my fingers firmly crossed behind my back, and hoped.

There was still stuff to arrange (trophies and firewood, mainly) and, to give the event something it hadn't had before, I decided to arrange a ride-out, but not to a pub cos that's just asking for trouble, really, isn't it? No, I thought we'd go to the seaside for chips and ice cream (and tea), and went to see Paul at Revved Up in Walton-on-the-Naze to see if he was up for 30-odd (some very odd) rat bikes invading his forecourt one Saturday at the beginning of June? As he nonchalantly said yes, I did wonder if he knew what he'd let himself in for (and, seeing the look on his face when we rocked up, I don't think he did) – so that was that sorted. Right then!

The (Fri)day came and I set off from Chez Me at some frighteningly early hour of the morning, way before, I thought, anyone else'd get there, but ended up following Big Rob and Sarah in. It was about 8.30am – "What the bloody hell are you doing here?" I asked, knowing they'd come from somewhere down on the south coast. "Oh, we like to get here early," they smiled. Again, right then…

As the day progressed, the (small) field started to fill up and, by about tea-time, there were around 45 of us, from all over the land, and abroad, too – Chris from Scotland, Matt Rats from France on his wonderful Honda Hornet, and Chris and Woody from Holland (Chris aboard a Honda Cub!). Friday passed in a bit of a blur of friends talking shi… er, stuff, in the pub and round the fire 'til the early hours – kind o' like normal then really.

JUST RIDE IT
DARE TO BE DIFFERENT
IF IT'S SUNNY I RIDE IF IT RAINS I DRINK BEER
IN RUST WE TRUST

BUSSPHALUS

Why so serious?!

The ride-out Saturday wasn't attended by all as some'd seriously overdone it the night before and, even by gone midday, didn't feel up to operating machinery. The plan was for me to lead, and Pam to bring up the rear, cos we knew where we were going, and everyone seemed happy to let us do that, despite me giving them all the address for their sat-navs/phones. The route wasn't terribly involved, quite twisty and rough in places, but okay (probably a good thing for Cookie and Pete on their recently featured Honda hardtails). VJ and Dr Death did their stopping-the-traffic-at-junctions bit, and much tea, and many chips, was consumed at the seaside and, slightly concerningly, everyone decided to follow me and Pam back to the pub, even though I announced I wasn't going to use the sat-nav on the way home and just wing it… brave of them or foolhardy? You decide. We did do some very small lanes, with grass and moss growing up the middle, and probably about ten miles more than was strictly necessary, but I didn't hear anyone complain so it must've been alright for them, mustn't it?

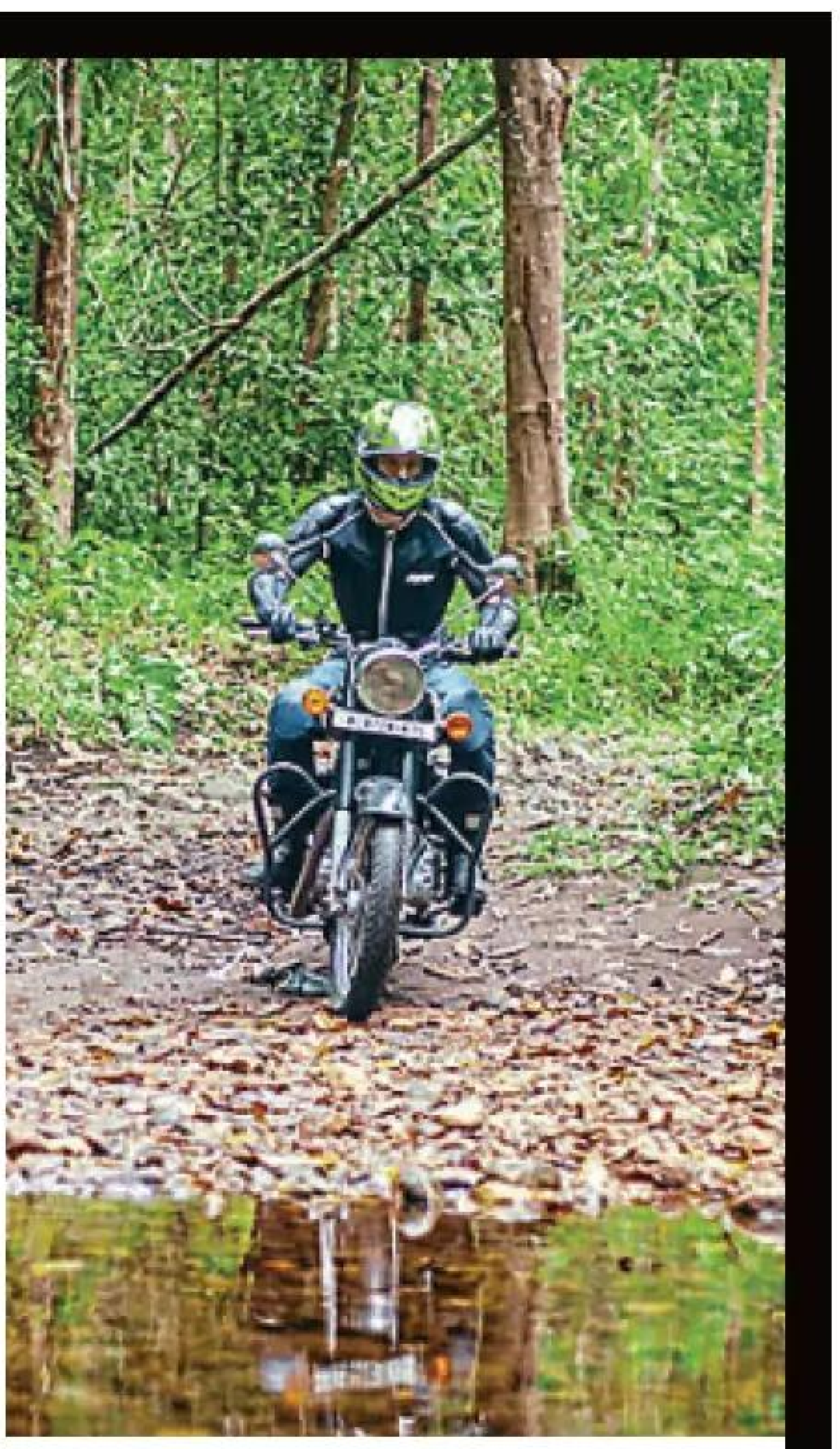
Back at the site there was the usual bike show, complete with incredible Death of Rats (with glowing blue eyes!) trophies made and presented by Ms Gothabilly. Kind o' apt really, the bit o' cardboard I wrote the winners' names on got used, I think, to light the fire that evening, but I do know Phyps' godawful sidecar thing got Best Unbalanced (describing both it and him perfectly), and Matt Rats' rather fabulous Honda got Best in Show. As for the other eight categories, not a clue…

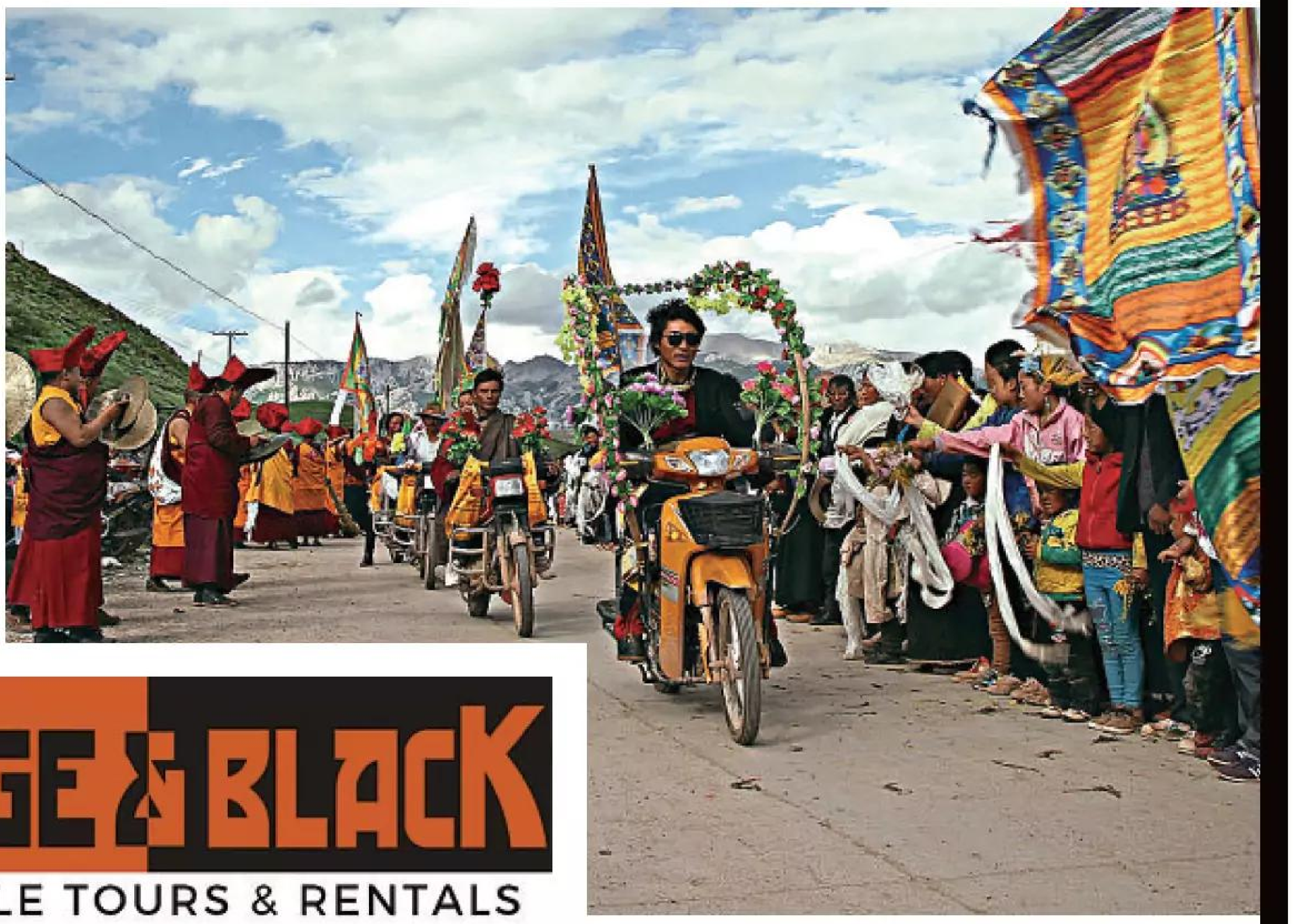
Saturday night was, really, a repeat of Friday night, albeit slightly less full-on, but it was still gone 2am (I think) when I finally stumbled off to bed, having drunk more than enough beer and talked more arse than an international conference of proctologists – great night.

Plans're already underway for the 2026 event; again, it'll be rats and invite only so if you ride one and want an invite, contact me through Facebook.

NIK
PICS BY **LAUREN**

GREEN COTTAGE
BBQ Lassi
NAGARKOT COMMUNITY HOME STAY
GREEN COTTAGE





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People go touring in America because they know what they want and are confident in what they will get. And the USA always delivers and much more besides. But riding in the Himalayas and India is quite the opposite. Most have only an inkling of what it might be like, and the actual experience is always so much more.

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TECH

Mr Bridges' Motorcycle Diaries

VOL. VIII,
EPISODE XI

LAST TIME AROUND I MENTIONED SOLAR POWER, AND IT TURNS OUT THAT SOLAR POWER HAS A LOT IN COMMON WITH TINKERING WITH MOTORCYCLES… AT LEAST IT DOES IN SO FAR AS IF YOU ASK SOMEONE HOW TO GO ABOUT IT, THE NUMBER OF DIFFERENT ANSWERS YOU'LL GET'LL BE EQUAL TO, OR SLIGHTLY GREATER THAN, THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE YOU ASK.

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This can be confusing, but there's a rule of thumb that I've found over a number of years to separate the wheat from the chaff (so to speak) when it comes to multiple answers to the same question, and that is to listen to the people that ask you a question in return. And, in this case, the question you want to hear is: 'What are you trying to do with it?'

For now, with the evenings drawing in, all I'm interested in for the moment is getting some light into the new workshop; later on I'll want to run some 240-volt equipment off it and, ideally, a welder if that's feasible (where feasible means the same as affordable) but, for now, I'd just like to be able to see what I'm doing after three in the afternoon. A solar set up has four components: solar panels, charge controller, batteries and an inverter. These'll need wiring together, and I'm aware that a lot of people're wholly opposed to wiring things so, in that case, it might pay to look at a portable power pack and a solar panel. A very cursory Google, and I found a 300-watt Jackery power-bank on Amazon for £150, and Ugly

Neil has a 600-watt V-Tac one he bought from ToolStation on special offer for £199 (Fig.1&2). Sadly, it's done nothing for his photography skills, but needs must and all that. I realise that this isn't solar, but it is the battery, charge controller and inverter all in one box, and'll happily charge from the mains. If your workshop's at the end of the garden, or in a lockup four miles away, and its either inconvenient or impossible to get power there, then this might be the answer as you can take it home with you when you're done for the evening. And while neither Neil's V-Tac or the Jackery really have the wattage to run much in the way of power tools, given the full sine-wave inverter, it should happily charge the batteries for the power tools. Typically, power banks have USB outlets, 12-volt outlets of the car cigarette lighter variety, at least one 240-volt mains plug, a mains-charging lead, and a 12-24-volt DC charging port. While the portability and the flexibility (you could take it camping or fishing for instance) might be appealing to a lot of people, for me, having to remember to take it home, remember to plug it in at home, and then remember to pick it up next time I'm off to the workshop would inevitably result in a system failure. This isn't a huge problem as for most power banks you can buy a matching solar panel, and have a plug-in charging solution for it. If you want to keep it simple, it's probably best to stick to a solar panel made by the manufacturer of the power bank, mainly because power banks seem to have 12-to-24-volt inputs and a lot of solar panels're putting out 48 volts, which doesn't sound like a happy combination to me. The answer'd be to use a solar charge controller to step the voltage down to 12 or 24 volts but, at this point, things are getting a little more complicated, and you might be questioning whether it might be cheaper to simply build your own system.

AC OUT PUT MAX 600W
AC OUT PUT MAX 600W

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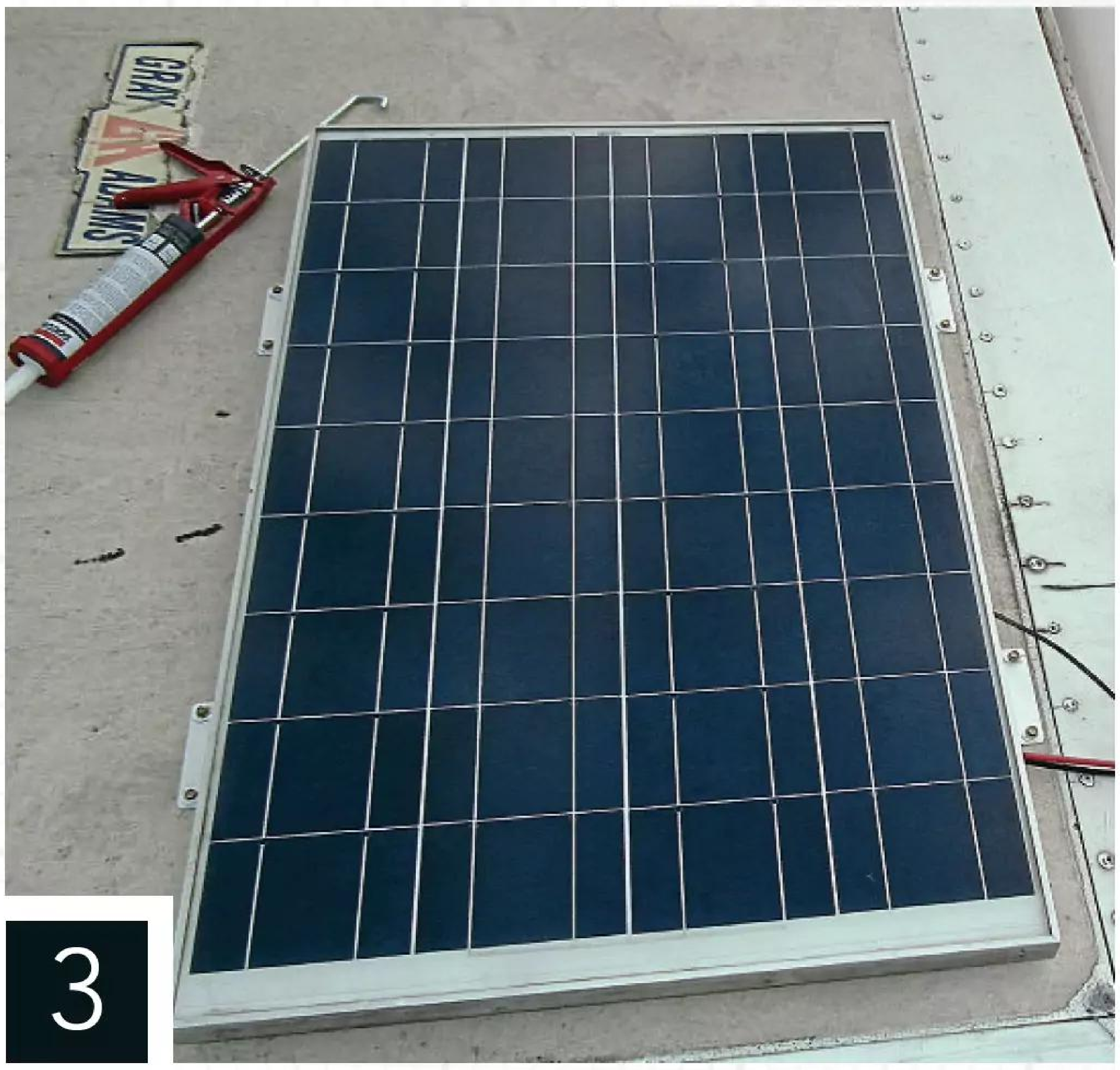

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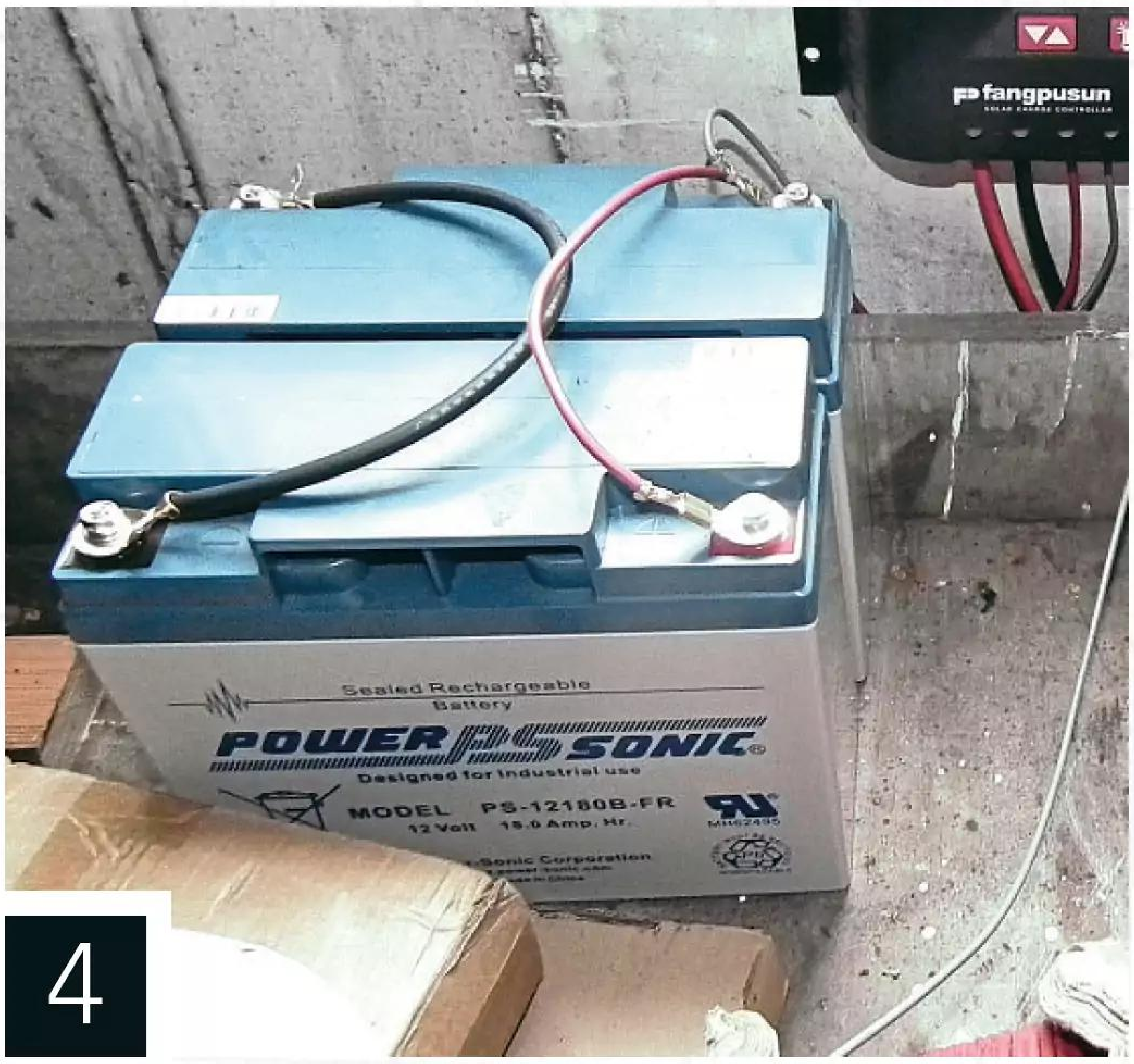

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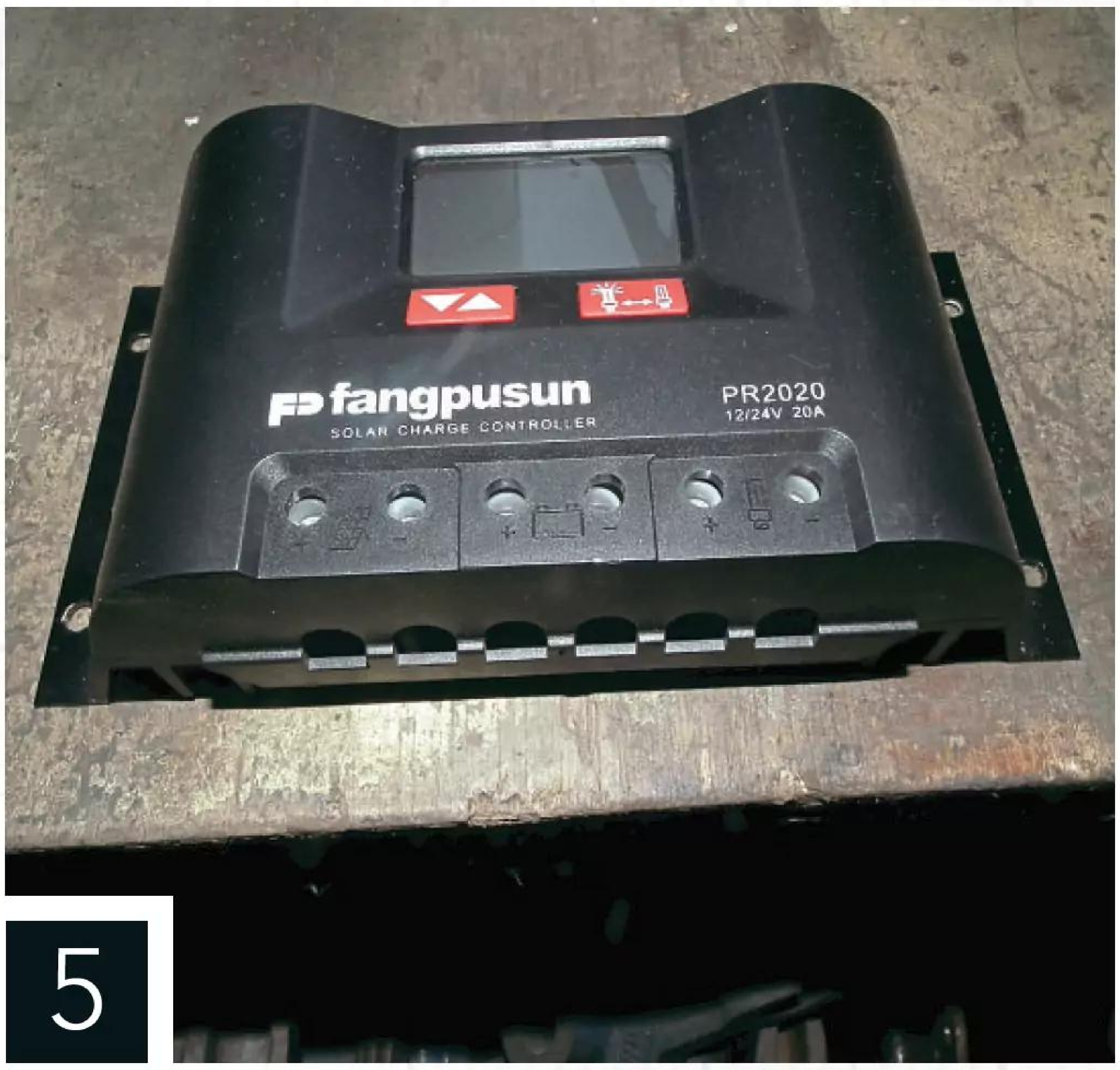

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This leads to which type of solar panel do you need? Which type of charge controller? Battery type? Which inverter? For a budget system, in most cases the answer to those questions is 'secondhand'. Consider solar panels (Fig.3). Over a period of 10 or 15 years a solar panel might degrade by 15%, so a 10-year-old panel that used to put out 100 watts might only be putting out 85 watts these days but, if its half the price of a new 100-watt panel, then two of them're putting out 170 watts for the same money as a new 100-watt panel and, if you keep an eye on Facebook Marketplace, then they can be found for less than half the current new cost. I'd add the caveat that a lot of the flexible solar panels that came off eBay, Amazon, AliBaba, or similar, probably weren't actually producing the claimed output from new, and definitely won't be anywhere near it after a few years but, some back of the envelope sums, at around 55 degrees North, which's more or less where you find England, the sun puts out an average of around 100 watts per square metre, and spikes to maybe 800 on a sunny day, and modern solar panels're 15-25% efficient, so, on a good day with a following wind, a square metre of solar panel's going to give 200 watts. A two-foot (60cm) by one-foot (30cm) flexible solar panel has an area of 0.186 square metres so it's, at best, 30 watts. Used secondhand panels from a domestic installation're probably the best bet, along with ex-camper van panels.

While you're going to need a solar controller, once you've sourced some panels, the next thing to look out for if you're going secondhand is probably batteries. The price difference between lithium-ion and lead-acid leisure batteries has diminished a lot in recent years and, if you're buying new, then LiFePo batteries probably make a lot of sense. If all you're trying to do is light a bunch of LEDs though, so you can see what you're doing of an evening, it's worth having a look at burglar-alarm/emergency lighting batteries (Fig.4) – these're lead-acid, but they're industrial so they tend to be cheaper per amp/hour than other batteries, and're used as back-up systems so they tend to get swapped out after a given number of years, which suggests there might be surfeit of used ones out there. Facebook Marketplace and burglar and fire-alarm installers're worth checking out. You could even use some of those old motorcycle batteries you've got kicking around to get you going…

The other thing about batteries is solar controllers. There're broadly two types of solar controllers: PWM and MPPT. They're not really worth buying used – the one I was given with the solar panel (Fig.5) decided to give up the ghost so I did a quick dive on to Amazon to get one for the next day so I could write that up for this article. Brand-new, delivered next day, it was £7.99. And while it did turn up the next day, I was also beset by a plague of werc, cyraagry, and various other aches which turned up with it. Or it might be a cold? Either way, I haven't managed to get to the workshop to install the new charge controller, but I have a deep suspicion that, despite being labelled as an MPPT controller (Fig.6), the £7.99 price tag and the similarity to the dead PWM one suggests that the MPPT label's possibly a little far from the truth and, having watched a few videos on YouTube, it's not unknown for Chinese manufacturers to label PWM controllers as MPPT. PWM is a method of controlling the power output by switching, or pulsing, the power and altering the width of those pulse, the 'ON' time and the 'OFF' time, to average out, or

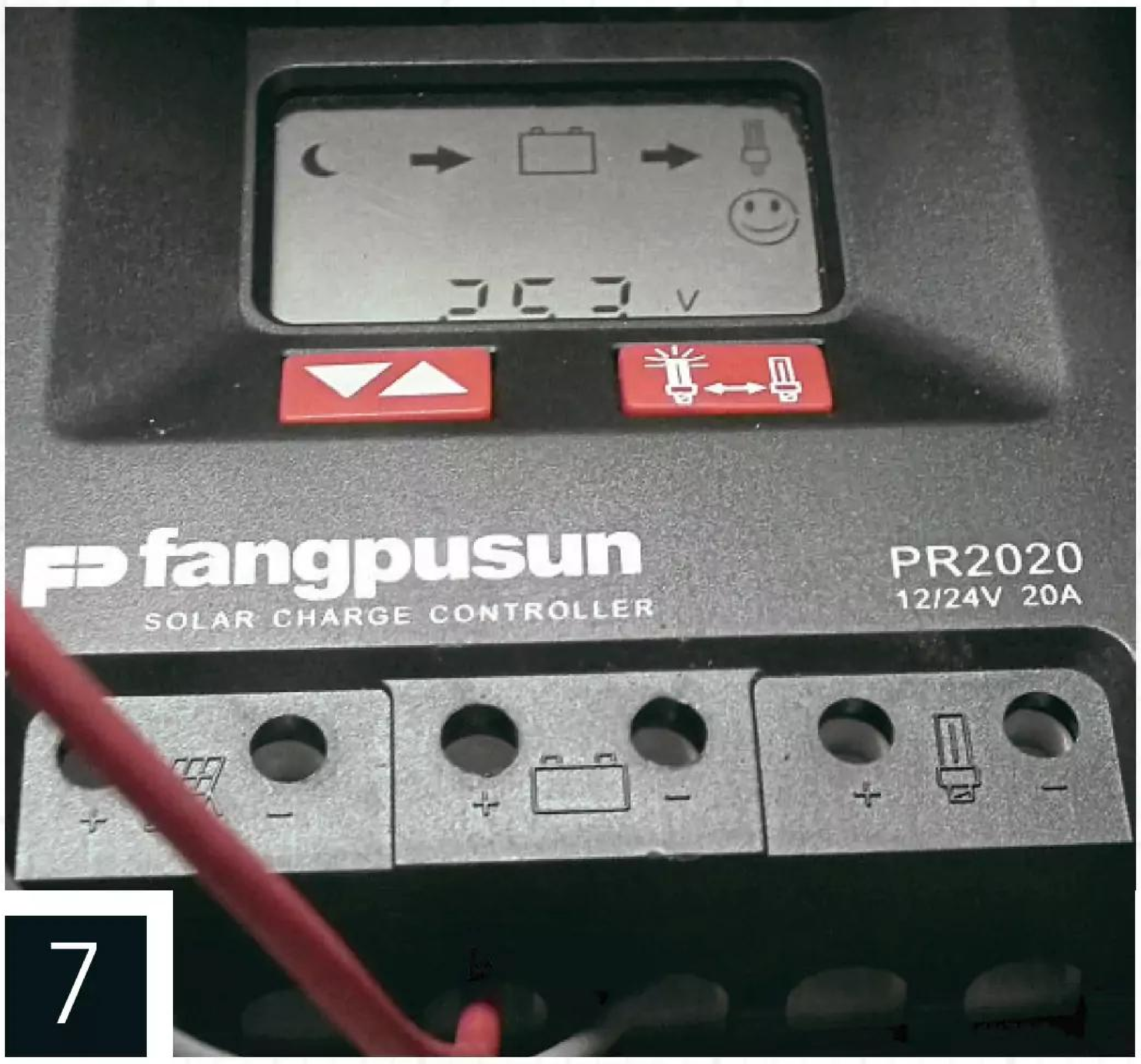
MPPT SOLAR
charge controller
OUT DC5V2A
USB
Roh

6

modulate, the output, while MPPT is 'maximum power point tracking' and adjusts the output to the optimum, including a 'float' charge when the batteries're fully charged.

One thing both controllers have in common is that they both state clearly that they're NOT suitable for anything other than lead-acid batteries, which is why I suggested getting the batteries first as, that way, you can check that the controller's suitable for the batteries. If they're lead-acid, most things should work, but more caution's probably wise for other battery types. Currently, I'm just interested in getting some light on the subject but, at some point, I'm at least going to want to charge the recently acquired cordless drill and grinder, so an inverter'll be on the shopping list. Briefly, inverters come in three varieties: square wave, modified sine-wave, or pure sine-wave. Anything with electronics really needs a pure sine-wave inverter, and battery chargers for cordless tools have electronics in them so I think it has to be pure sine-wave? And given the PWM controllers labelled as MPPT, I'd be a little reluctant to use a pure sine-wave inverter which didn't have either a recognised brand name, or a receipt from a shop in the UK with it. What I ended up with was a solar panel that came off my Dad's motorhome (see Fig.3) from when he upgraded it and the matching solar controller (see Fig.5). A quick Google of the name and model number for the controller (Fig.7) turned up the manual online, and that had the installation instructions. I was hoping to use the existing LED lights in the ceiling of the workshop (Fig.8) and those were 24-volt, so I chose two 18-amp/hour alarm/emergency lighting batteries so I had the option of connecting them in parallel for 12 volts or series for 24 volts. Some of the other things I bought were the mounting brackets for the panel (Fig.9), because I'm not set up enough to have made them myself just yet; the MC4 connectors for the solar cabling (Fig.10) I got with the panel; and a box of four work-lights rated for 12–30 volts. The reason for not committing to the 24-volt plan is that I also have a diesel heater that uses a 12-volt supply, and workshop heating is a luxury I've not had in a long time. With everything sourced, the question remains, how successful is it going to be?

MR. BRIDGES



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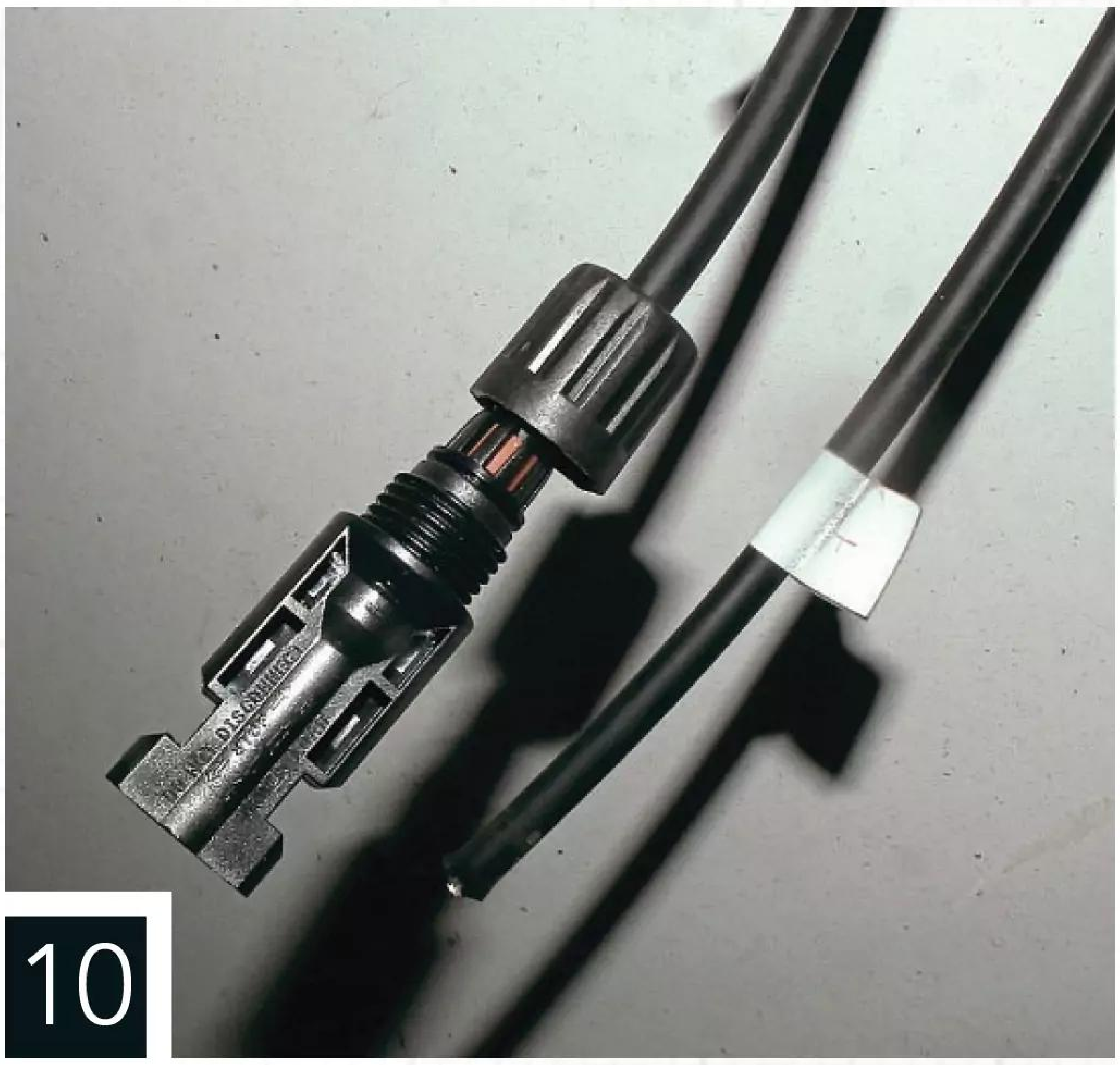

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DOHC
2025

A QUESTION OF REVENGE

PART TWO

WINTER'D LONG OUTSTAYED ITS WELCOME AND LOITERED AMONGST THE HILLS UNTIL LATE APRIL. SPRING, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAD BEEN AND GONE WITHIN THE SPACE OF A FORTNIGHT, BUT ITS HASTY DEPARTURE'D USHERED IN WHAT PROMISED TO BE A LONG, AND HOPEFULLY HOT, SUMMER.

Emily and Ged sat side by side on the old drystone wall, a half-eaten bag of chips cosily between them. The delicate ringed fingers of Emily's right hand pushed a chip between her painted lips, but their nimbleness was no match for the shovels at the end of her uncle's wrists as he pushed handfuls into his ever-eager mouth. “Not many in there, were there, girl?”

“Less than I was expecting,” replied his slightly disgruntled, and still hungry, niece as she watched him scrumple the now empty paper into a ball. If a change really is as good as a rest then, she wondered, why was she tired? She'd finally given in to his continual nagging and sold her little terraced house in town and, after a barrage of none-too-subtle reminders that “one day this'll all be yours anyway”, she'd moved in. With the money from the sale invested, she'd penned a letter of resignation and walked out of her job at the council offices. Some of her friends'd voiced concerns about her seemingly sudden life changes, but this was a life that afforded her genuine freedom and, despite its slightly unconventional nature, she revelled in it.

Ged took a large swig from his mug, then set it down on the wall. “Well, my little apprentice, it'll soon be your birthday, have you owt planned for the weekend?”

She turned her head to face him. “Nothing,” she replied, “why? What are you thinking?”

His eyes remained fixed on the increasingly fat lambs in the opposite field.

“Well, I wondered whether you might fancy going to a do?”

She continued to look at him, but now with added suspicion. “Not another autojumble, is it?”

“No, but what's wrong with autojumbles?” said a now somewhat defensive Ged.

She thought for a second before saying: “Nowt, I suppose, but they just seem to be full of old blokes wearing holey jumpers buying rusty old shit – all you can hear is people sucking air through their teeth and tutting.”

He considered her appraisal and decided that, although a little harsh, it was reasonably accurate so decided to let it go and reply without hostility. “No, a bike do, wi' bands and stuff.”

She was now even more suspicious than before. “You want to go to a bike rally?” she asked.

“Yeah, why not?” he replied while trying to sound upbeat, and at least partially convincing.

“Umm, perhaps because you don't like people, you're socially inept, and generally behave like Steve Earle's granddad.” It was true that Ged wasn't really a people person, and years of living on his own'd left his social skill set rather depleted but, as far as he knew, he was no one's granddad.

“How do you mean, Steve Earle's granddad?”

“Well,” replied Emily, knowing she now had the upper hand, “apparently he only went to town twice a year, too.”

His motivation remained a mystery and, given how uncharacteristic his suggestion was, she did have some reservations. She pondered briefly, but without too much effort was able to persuade herself that she should perhaps put aside her cynicism and that, maybe, he simply wanted to do something nice for her birthday. “Go on then,” she said.

……

The red, fiery sky of Friday evening gave way to the dark blanket of Friday night, and the sound of heavy boots on the stairs opened Emily's eyes to a bright Saturday morning. She lay there and wondered whether her uncle ever slept – he was always up when she went to bed and, no matter what time she stirred, he'd already be downstairs busying himself with the unfolding day. Washed and dressed, she entered the kitchen.

“You look nice, girl, new jeans?”

A little taken aback by a compliment, and especially one so early, she replied: “Do you like them?”

“Aye, they make your arse look less bony.”

She should've known that was coming, but the early-morning sun streaming through the kitchen window must've blindsided her. “Well, you still look like a tramp, and are you really wearing that T-shirt?”

Ged looked down at his chest and the fabric pulled tightly across it. “What's wrong wi' it?” he asked. His niece lifted one eyebrow and gently shook her head.

“Aside from the fact it says ‘F*ck Coppers, Ride Choppers, it's got a hole int' back.”

……

Clutching a slice of toast in one hand and her saddlebag in the other, she pulled the

A QUESTION OF REVENGE

door shut, and began to walk across the yard. Her 400 sat quietly in the sun, yet seemed completely overshadowed by the menacing bulk of Revenge, which sat patiently beside her. After swallowing the last of her toast, she placed her neatly packed ’bag over the back of her bike, and noted the stark contrast between it and the ripped and bulging black bin liner hastily, and in her mind quite badly, bungied above Revenge’s headlight.

Ged straddled his bike, turned the fuel on, lifted the choke plunger, and then hit the ‘loud’ button. An initial cough gave way to a roar as Revenge spat flames against her pilot’s left leg, while he blipped the throttle to warm her through and clear her lungs.

Once the pair were off the track and on to the road proper, the usual game of leapfrog soon began. The rules were quite simple, and all Emily had to do was ride along at a steady sixty/sixty-five, but Ged’s role was more involved. He’d ride ahead and stop at a convenient spot, awaiting his companion’s arrival. Once past and some way further on, he’d then set off in pursuit and usually pass a little later travelling at approximately twice the speed. Some people’d certainly argue that Revenge brought out the worst in Ged, but having witnessed the inane grin spread across his face when the pair of them were together, Emily knew that she actually brought out the very best in him.

With a few too many petrol, brew, and then wee stops, they didn’t arrive at their destination until late afternoon. It was busy, certainly busier than Emily remembered from her previous visit a couple of years earlier. They prowled the campsite until a likely-looking spot was spied, with enough room for two tents and a pair of bikes between. Ged spent the next hour or so following his much more enthusiastic niece around the trade stalls. He’d occasionally see an old face and enter into a brief conversation, but he had a more pressing reason to be here. At the far end of the site was an area divided from the rest by a high orange mesh fence, and that’s where he was headed. “Come on, girl,” he said while walking off.

Catching back up with him, she asked: “Where we going?” Her uncle nodded towards the orange fence. “But isn’t that Club only?”

“Yeah, and friends,” he replied.

As they neared, a man stepped forward to intercept their approach. “What do you want?” he asked in a no-nonsense kind of way.

Ged responded: “I wanna go in there and see someone.”

“It’s Club only, you can’t.”

Emily felt a bit uneasy, but her uncle remained completely unfazed. “Well, you go in there and tell Scotty that Ged’s here, alright?”

“Ged who?”

Ged’s dislike of authority knew no bounds and made no distinction. “Are you hard of understanding or summat, lad?”

Emily could feel herself begin to cringe as both men now stared at each other in silence. She took a step forward, and placed her hand gently on the forearm of the gatekeeper. “Please, it is quite important,” she said in a little lost lamb voice.

“Wait here.” The man turned and walked off behind the fence. She had no idea who Scotty was, or how long it might take to find him, but five minutes later she knew the answer to both of those questions. Mr No Nonsense reappeared, but now he had someone else with him – an older man, probably somewhere between Ged’s age and death, she thought.

“Jesus Christ, I thought you were long gone, Ged,” he said in a diluted Scottish accent. He put his arm around Ged’s shoulder. “Come on in, and you lass,” nodding at Emily, who was surprised to discover that things behind the fence seemed very similar to how things were in front of it. She stood in a large courtyard with a bar at one end and a small stage at the other. Farm buildings of various sizes and states formed a perimeter and, within it, people stood, drank, and chatted, so she thought she’d join in. “Does anyone want a drink?” she asked.

“Aye, get Scotty a brown ale, and see if you can find me a brew, love.”

Emily turned to do as instructed and, as she did, a young prospect Ged’d already clocked eying up his niece’s long legs and slim waist said: “I’ll come and give you a hand.”

Before he’d even moved, Ged’d taken a grip of his arm and quietly, but very firmly, said: “Your card’s marked, son, don’t even think it,” before shaking him loose. In turn, the scolded prospect looked towards Scotty hoping for reassurance, but he simply smiled a crooked smile and shrugged.

With Emily’s return and drinks in hand, they took up residency at a small table towards the back of the barn which served as a makeshift clubhouse. Emily sat quietly, flanked by the two men who indulged themselves with reminisce and recollection. As she listened, she thought that if even only half the stories were true, then how was it both of them were still free or even still breathing?

……

Returning from the bar a second time, she noticed that, although the conversation was still in full swing, the topic appeared to have changed with the past having given way to the present. Ged was throwing figures about. “Four grand,” he said, but Scotty shook his head. “Alright then, what about four an’ half?” but, again, Scotty simply shook his head in reply.

A few seconds of silence passed between them before Scotty said: “Look, Ged, I’m not really bothered about the money, so how about we have a wager instead?”

“What kind of wager?”

“An arm wrestle.”

A smile spread quickly across Ged’s face. “Give over, I never lost when we were young, so what’s changed?”

Scotty smiled his crooked smile back across the table. “Right then,”, he said “if you win I’ll sell you that bike for a grand but, you lose, I’ll give you a grand for that black EFE of yours.”

Emily listened and the more she heard, the less she liked. She caught her uncle’s eye and, with his attention gained, shook her head at him.

“Don’t worry love, this bugger’s never beaten me before, and he won’t now.”

Ged’d already taken his jacket off, and begun to roll up the sleeves of his shirt when Scotty added: “Sorry, Ged, did you think I was your opponent? I’m far too old for this stuff now – I thought my lad Jack could step in,” and with that he stood from his plastic patio chair, put his hand to his mouth, and shouted out across the room. He might as well’ve called out to the four corners of Hell because what appeared certainly didn’t look to be of this world – by Emily’s reckoning, Jack was not only barely human, but also 6’4” and eighteen stone, had knuckles that dragged on the ground and, to her surprise, was wearing a kilt. She prayed to every deity she knew, and a handful more that she simply made up, that Ged’d back down, but she also knew that wasn’t going to happen. She, he, and no doubt everyone else knew he’d been stitched up, but with so much pride sat at the table there was simply no room left for sense.

Ged looked up at Jack. “You’d best sit down then, youth,” he said.

Son replaced father at the table and, as Jack readied himself, Emily’s brain went into meltdown. What was he thinking? Did he not realise that he was going to lose Revenge? ‘LOSE REVENGE?’ she shouted at herself, ‘I’m not having that! But what can I do to stop it – I’m a twenty-four-year-old woman drowning in a room full of tight sinew and testosterone?’ She perhaps held on to that thought a little longer than necessary, but the panic soon resumed, and she felt so utterly and desperately helpless and, as the club enforcer overseeing the match released his tattooed hand from the interlocked pair beneath, Emily's mind collapsed in on itself and fell silent.

A second passed… or was it ten or twenty? She didn't know, but as her senses slowly returned, so did the realisation that she now seemed to be holding something in her hand. Whatever it was felt alien yet somehow familiar, and certainly not unpleasant, so she gave it a bit of a squeeze and, as she did, Jack's grip weakened a little. The penny dropped. Now fully aware, and somewhat surprised by the current situation, she recalled how Ged'd always said that if you live by the sword then you should be prepared to die by it, and with that thought providing adequate justification, she squeezed harder. She smiled a faint smile; less than a minute ago she'd felt absolutely helpless, yet now here she was with the outcome of this unfolding battle resting solely in her hands. She squeezed again a bit harder, and again harder still, until the back of Jack's hand hit the table with a convincing thud. Jeers and cheers filled the corner of the room and, after shaking the cramp from their hands, the pair of gladiators shook each others' while Emily placed hers innocently back on the table. She hoped and suspected Jack wouldn't say anything, and she was right - obviously losing with dignity was more favourable than a potential life of ridicule, albeit good-natured.

Ged was always humble and, as they walked back through the campsite later that evening, he admitted that he thought Jack might've had the better of him. "He's a strong lad that one, Em, my arm's killing me."

"It's your own fault, you stupid sod - don't go doing anything like that again," she snapped back.

Sensing the mood, Ged tried to pacify her. "It's okay, love – yeah, he was a big, strong lad an' all, but he lacked technique. I could feel him going after a minute or so… to be honest with you, I just don't think he had the balls for it."

Emily bit her bottom lip before regaining her composure. "Oh, I'm pretty sure he had the balls for it," she said.

……

It was the following Tuesday – the day of Emily's twenty-fifth birthday. She'd been greeted in the kitchen by half-a-dozen cards and a wilting bunch of forecourt flowers dying on the table. As she padded barefoot across the tiled floor towards the kettle, a piece of paper caught her eye. She bent down, picked it up, and turned it over. It was a note in Ged's best scribble. It read, 'Morning, love, before you do owt could you ride over to Jackson's and pick up two dozen, 3-inch 5/16 UNF stainless flanged button heads? Oh, and happy birthday, I got you some flowers.'

After drowning her gift in the sink, and feeling more underwhelmed than over, she picked up her helmet and keys off the worktop, slipped on her boots, and went outside. There was no sign of her uncle – the workshop was strangely quiet, and his van was missing. 'Cheeky bastard,' she thought, 'why didn't he go an' get his own bolts if he was going out?'

The ride to Jackson's was pleasant enough though, and her mood lifted with the rising temperature of the morning air. Remembering that it was, in fact, her birthday, a detour to the garden centre for some coffee and lots of cake seemed in order, and maybe she'd even get to see some nice flowers – everything in life seems better when your insides're full of triple chocolate sponge and your thoughts're dancing a caffeine-fuelled jig. Maybe she'd been unfair? He usually couldn't remember his own birthday so, although her flowers were crap, in the great scheme of things she was actually ahead and winning. The day was turning out better than expected, and there seemed no great need to rush back so she took her time and meandered around the lanes while heading in the general direction of home.

……

It'd gone four by the time she arrived back, and Ged was back, too. He'd parked the van unusually close to the house, and the rear doors were open. After switching off her bike, she pulled her helmet from her head, shook her hair, and walked towards the open doors. Of course, she wasn't surprised to find him in there with a motorbike.

"Alright, Em?" Ged patted the black leather of the seat. "Do you like it?" he asked.

She peered into the van. "I don't know yet, I can't really see it properly, what is it?"

"It's a digger," said Ged, providing Emily with cause for a second question.

"Aren't they usually much bigger, generally dirtier, and quite often yellow?" He said nothing, but Emily carried on. "Why don't you get it out of the van? I'll do us a brew, and you can tell me all about it. I assume it's likely got something to do with last weekend, has it?"

In a little over the time it takes to boil some water and have a wee, she'd returned. Balancing Ged's mug on the wall, she sat beside it and watched him swear at the tangled mess of tie-down straps his unloading efforts'd produced until he unceremoniously threw the entire mess into the back of the van and shut the doors on the problem. "Well, she's certainly pretty," she said, her eyes sinking into the deep blue paintwork. "Is that real gold?"

Ged nodded. "It is, girl, 24-carat gold-leaf… and the silvery-looking stuff, that's platinum-leaf – a proper bastard to work with. I've never touched it since."

Emily continued to stare at the bike in front of her. "You built it then?" she asked assuming she already knew the answer.

"No, I just helped. This was yer dad's bike – it's the last one he built."

"Oh," Emily replied a little taken aback, "so what happened to it?"

Ged sat down on the wall beside her. "Well, after yer dad died, yer mum wanted to sell it. I said I'd buy it, but she wouldn't let me." He took a breath and carried on. "It wasn't the money – I think it was that she needed to remember yer dad her own way, not simply through his things… does that make sense?"

"Kind of," she said.

Ged carried on. "Anyway, I said nowt to yer mum, but decided to keep track of it. She changed hands a couple of times and, eventually, ended up in a private collection up ont' east coast and sat for ten years or so."

"Then what?" asked an increasingly intrigued Emily.

"I heard a few months back that it'd somehow got into the hands of Scotty."

It was all starting to make sense to Emily now, or so she thought. "And you wanted it back, then?" she said.

Ged nodded. "Yeah, I'd always promised myself I'd get it back when the time was right, and last weekend was it."

A wiser Emily stood up and circled the bike, allowing her eyes to devour the details. "She's nice, but won't Revenge be jealous?" She winked at her uncle.

"Oh no, love, I think we've got crossed wires – she's not mine, she's yours."

Had she misheard him, or was he making fun of her?

"Mine?" she said, still not believing what she'd heard.

He stood and walked towards her. "Yes, love, she's yours – happy birthday."

Emily cried, and Ged tried not to. She wiped the tears from her cheeks, and tried to compose herself as Ged began to point things out to her. She heard "Z1, gold-plate, Blocksidge" and "four-inch under" but didn't really take any of it in until he said: "I'm just glad no one's repainted her because if you look at front a' tank, that's yer dad's signature."

She smiled at him in an attempt not to cry again and, sniffing tears up through her nose, asked: "What's she called?"

Ged hesitated then said: "She's yours, love, I was hoping you'd tell me."

She looked down at the tank, and ran her hand across it from side to side then, looking back up, said: "Truth… I think she's called Truth, Ged."

NORM
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
LOUISE LIMB

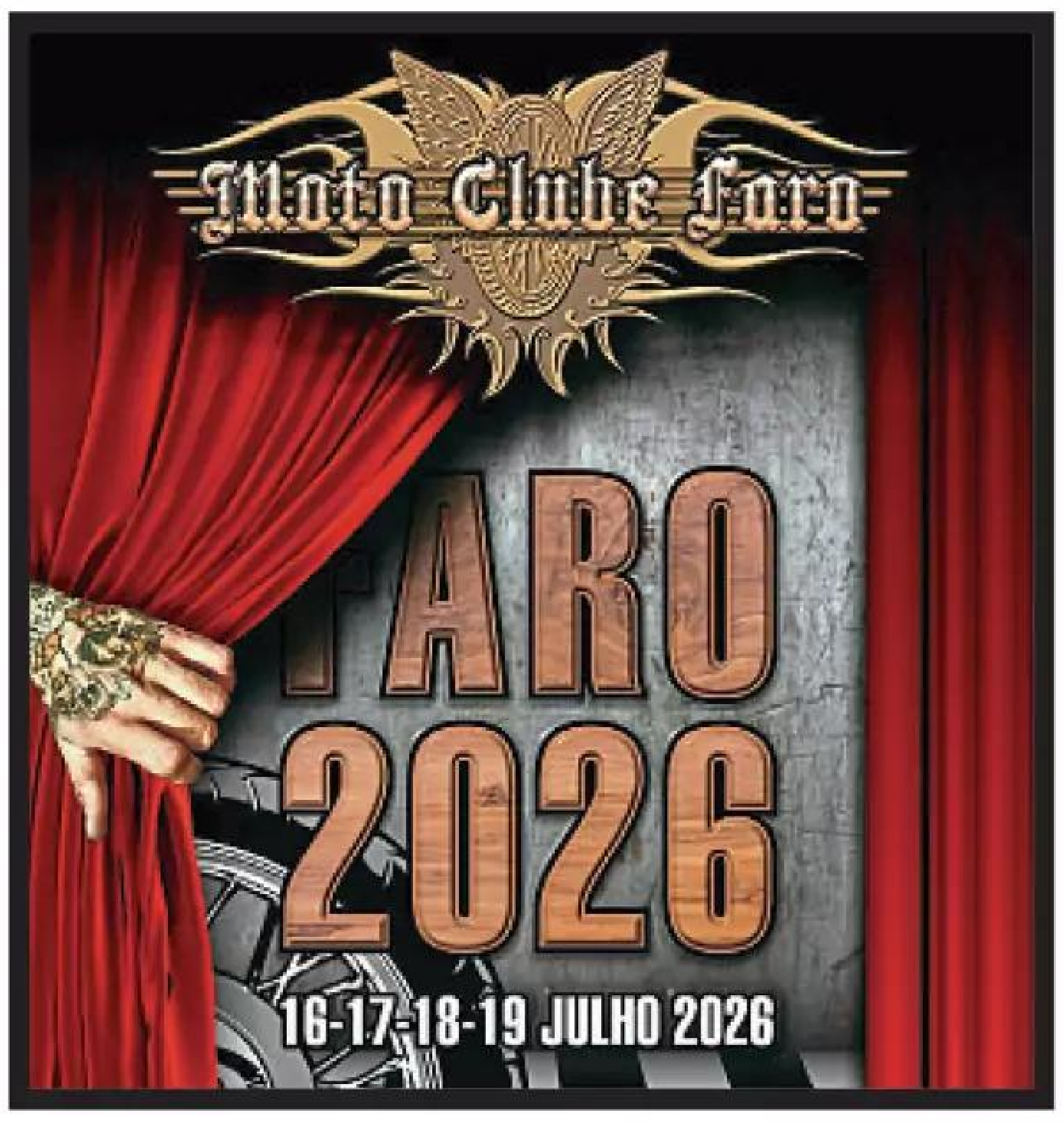
NEW STUNT RECORD

Kawasaki-sponsored stunt rider Jonny Davies, AKA JD Stunts, recently broke the Guinness World Record for the fastest 'highchair' (sitting over the handlebars) wheelie, reaching 127mph, beating the existing record of 125, aboard a modified ZX-10R which'd had its fairing removed and was fitted with a hand-operated rear brake, adjustable high-rise clip-ons, and a 'bar-mounted electronic gear-shifter, as well as a modified tank to provide better comfort and stability during the attempts. The attempt took place at Elvington Airfield, and although the first day was rained off, and there were strong crosswinds the next, his first proper run clocked an impressive 117mph, and he broke the record on his second.

JD has already broken several world records, including skiing behind a supercharged H2 SX last year at 159.52mph, and has plans to take on more in 2026.

FARO '26

The dates for Faro 2026 are fresh in – 16-19 July, at the usual site near the airport and beach just outside the city of Faro on the Algarve in Portugal. No details of bands or attractions yet, but you can keep an eye on the event's website at **www.motoclubefaro.pt**



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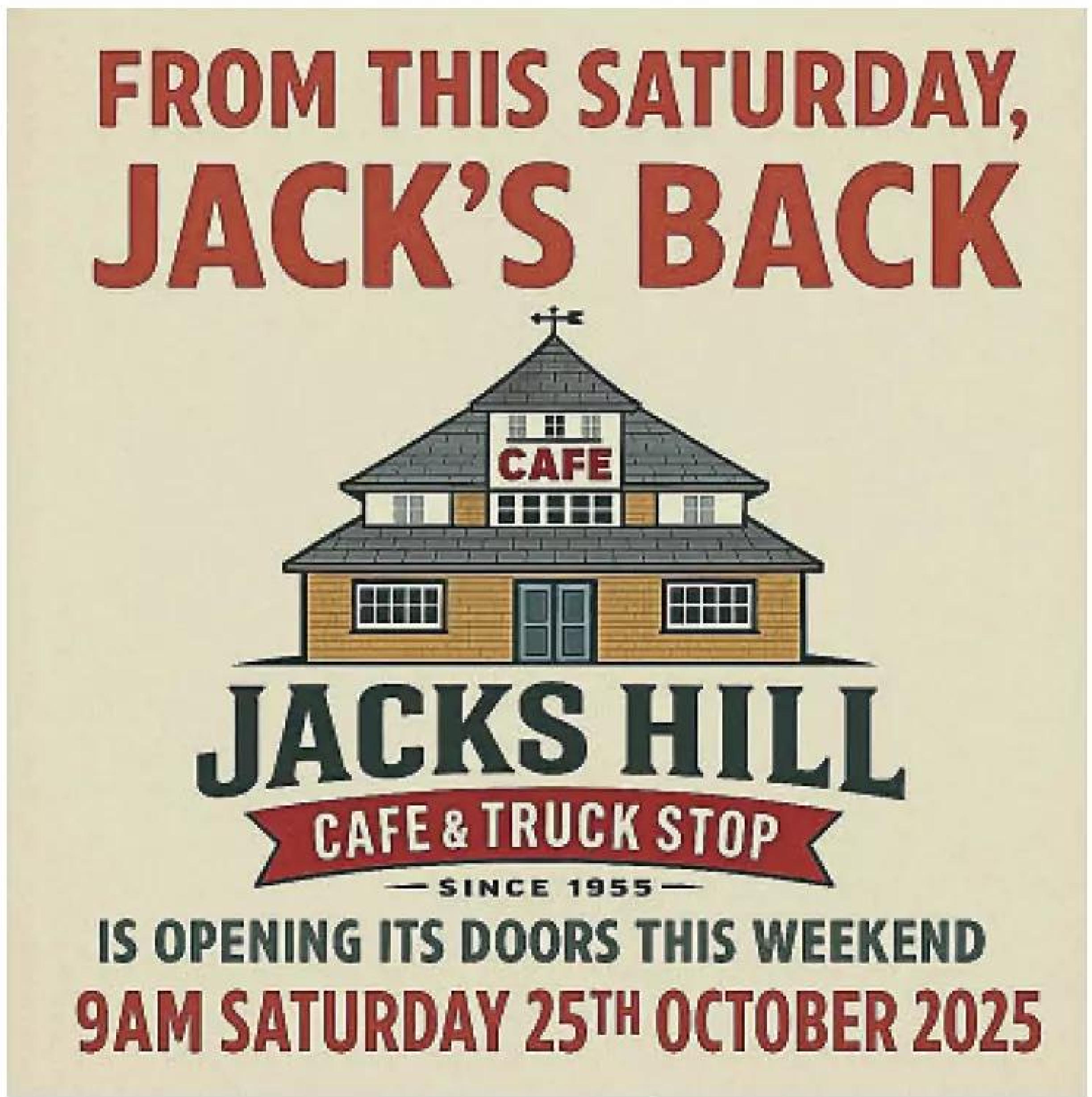
Give you loved one, or yourself, the last ride they, or you, deserve – Motorcycle Funerals is a motorcycle hearse service that covers the whole of the UK, and offers last rides attached to Triumph Bonnevilles, Harley Road Kings, or Suzuki Hayabusas to cater for all motorcycle types. Their services can be arranged directly or with a funeral director, and they offer thoughtful, respective care.

Contact them through their website at **www.motorcyclefunerals.com** or by ringing **01530 274888**.

JACK'S HILL REOPENS!



FROM THIS SATURDAY,
JACK'S BACK

JACKS HILL
CAFE & TRUCK STOP
SINCE 1955
IS OPENING ITS DOORS THIS WEEKEND
9AM SATURDAY 25TH OCTOBER 2025

By the time you read this, the iconic Jack's Hill café on the A5 just north of Towcester, which closed a few years ago, will've reopened.

A long-time favourite of both truckers and bikers alike, they'll have the same large car park facilities, and will be offering the same (well, similar anyway) menu, overnight parking, showers, etc. And, when they're all up and running properly, they'll start organising bike events, too.

For more info' go to their Facebook page or ring **0330 043 3435**.

HELMET PAINTING COURSE

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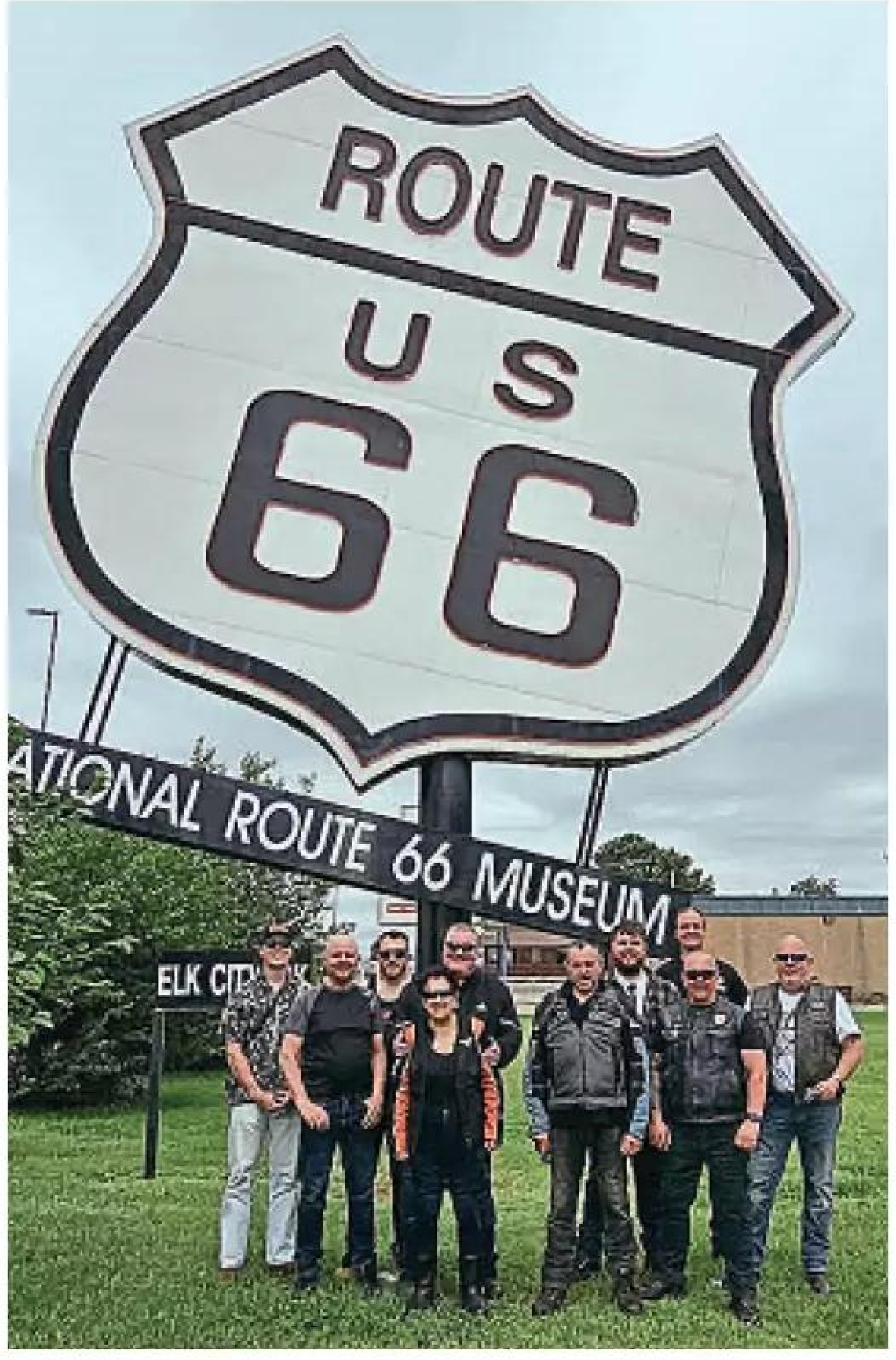
If you're quick you can get yourself enrolled on the Airbrush Co's three-day Helmet Painting Course on 18-20 Nov at their headquarters in Lancing in West Sussex.

On this three-day intensive class you'll learn grounding in all aspects of helmet painting, from technical to business and organisation, and will leave with a painted helmet to take away. The tutor is the renowned Piers Dowell, and will cover stripping a helmet, masking, sanding, priming, scribing a design, designing a template, computer work including scanning, order of paint application, airbrushing on to a helmet, clear coating, spray gun sizing and set up, and rebuilding.

It costs £530, including the helmet shell, and you'll need to arrange your accommodation (a list of local hotels and B&Bs is available). Book your place by ringing The Airbrush Company on **01903 767800** or email **sales@airbrushes.com**

ORANGE & BLACK HOLIDAYS

Worldwide bike travel specialists Orange & Black have announced a huge range of trips right around the world that they're offering to the travel-restless; everything from various stunning adventures across the USA, Canada, New Zealand, India, Thailand, Tibet and Nepal amongst others. They offer both summer and winter trips, and can arrange as little or as much as you'd like, supplying absolutely everything you'll need or just arranging bike hire in your chosen land.



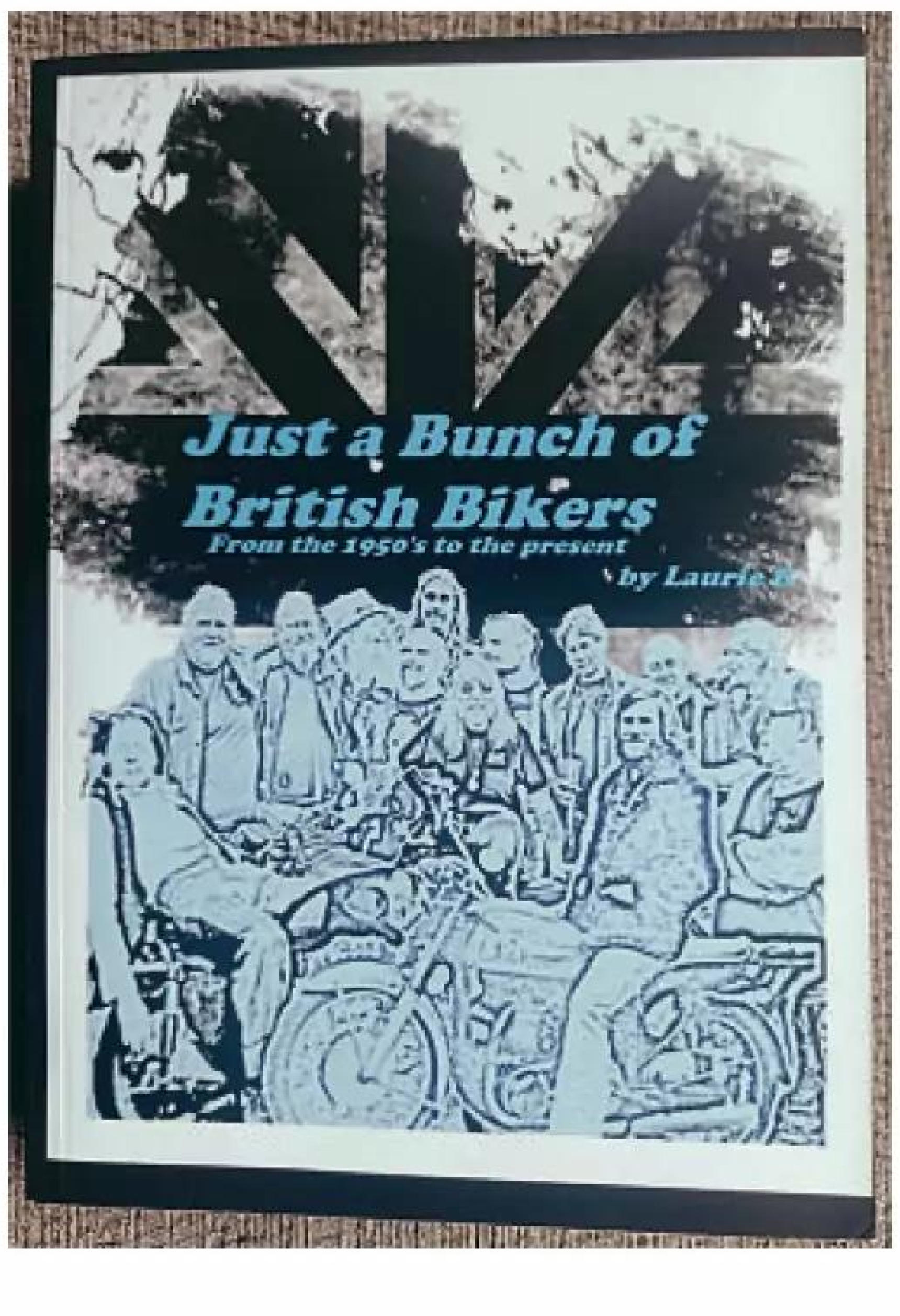
Their website, at **www.orange-and-black.co.uk** is huge and almost indefinitely detailed so, if you have a hankering to ride further afield, check it out.

JUST A BUNCH OF BRITISH BIKERS

'Kenny and his friends never started out as bikers as the concept didn't exist when he was growing up but, as time passed, the choices they made took them out of mainstream motorcycling and into a developing society of British bikers.

'Bikers - their behaviour's outlandish, their appearance distinctive, their bikes even more so. Some are works of art, some hint at the coming apocalypse, and some seem like scrapheap reanimations, and the noise they make proclaims Ragnarök's imminent. Traffic gives way when they ride in a pack, people allow them space in pubs and clubs, and yet they're far from being young tearaways – most've seen enough years to be expected to be at a mature, respectable stage in life, but've chosen to stay young in mind and behaviour, if not wholly in body. Who are they really? How do they differ from motorcyclists? Are they an openly secret society? A vast criminal organisation? Or just a group of ordinary people who took a turn off life's main highway?'

Just a Bunch of British Bikers is the new book from BSH, AWoL, and 100% Biker contributor Laurie 'Captain Semolina' Boxer, now retired and living in Spain, and while it's a work of fiction, does have a semi-autobiographical note of authenticity about it. It's funny, rude, sad and interesting (often on the same page), and well worth a read. Get your copy from Amazon as either a Kindle download or an actual paperback – just type in the title to find it.


Just a Bunch of British Bikers
From the 1950's to the present
by Lauri

Stuff

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CRASH TESTED!

No, not by some professionally trained stunter under controlled circumstances, with paramedics and ambulances on standby and stuff – no, by me, on a back road in Essex, on a cold day in October. Yes, ouch.

I was, that day, dressed almost from head to foot in Roadskin Motorcycle Gear products (not something I generally am); their AA-rated Cargo Trousers, an Easyrider II armoured hoodie, and a pair of their Summer Motorcycle Gloves, and, I have to say, I'm rather glad I was. I was lucky the accident was a relatively easy one; a low-speed low-side in which the back wheel went out from underneath me on a corner, and I, and the not-so-silly-sider, just slid across the road, coming to a halt on the opposite verge. Thankfully, there was nothing coming the other way, and I was able to crawl out from underneath it once a couple of cars'd stopped and their drivers lifted the bike enough to get my trapped foot from underneath it which, thanks to my Icon Stormhawk boots (in black, not the brown pictured) with their premium leather upper and internal dual D3O ankle inserts and reinforced rubber toe-caps, was completely undamaged despite being trapped underneath for the duration of the slide.

Once I was up and about, I was able to give myself a quick check over; hands (which, granted, had been holding the 'bars all the time), unhurt although the leather of the left-hand Roadskin glove, made from high-quality goat leather, renowned for its superior abrasion resistance, and with integrated knuckle and scaphoid protection, was scuffed where it'd rubbed along the Tarmac; upper body, bashed and sore, but unscarred as the Roadskin armoured hoodie, made from a single skin of super-strong Maximite that's extremely tough, and with removable armour in the shoulders, elbows and back, was dirt-smeared, but intact, no gravel rash anywhere (thankfully) although the bottom of my back hurt like hell; lower body, couple of skin-burns from moving fabric, but the Roadskin armoured cargos, fully lined with 340gsm 100% military-grade aramid lining (DuPont Kevlar), which's five times stronger than steel to provide superior abrasion resistance in case of an accident, had scuffed knees, but were undamaged, bar a split in the pocket stitching on the arse, and my knees, too, albeit sore, were undamaged (again, thankfully).

In fact, as it turned out, the only real injury was a cracked L2 vertebrae which, yes, hurts like a bastard, to go with the other two I've damaged before. Apart from that, I got off very lightly considering what could've happened, but I'm up and about and walking, driving, and, if it ever stops feckin' raining, I'm hoping to be riding by the end of the week – that's very lightly in my book.

All the gear listed above is still available and, as you can imagine, has my personal recommendation as being pretty damn good; the Stormhawk boots from anywhere that stocks the Icon range (see **www.partseurope.eu** for a list of stockists), and the Roadskin gear from **www.roadskin.co.uk**

PM C4-SERIES AIR CLEANERS

The Performance Machine C4-Series air-cleaner has a beautifully-sculpted ultra-lightweight carbon fibre shell; a forward-facing reverse cone filter element; and a CNC-machined billet aluminium end cap; and fit Keihin CV carbs on Evolution Big Twins 1993-2000, Twin Cams 1999-2006, cable-operated Delphi Fuel Injection on Dynas 2001-2017/Softails 2001-2015/ Touring models 2002-2007, Throttle-By-Wire-operated Delphi Fuel Injection on Touring models 2008-2016/ Trikes 2009-2016/Softails 2011-2017/Dyna Low Rider S 2016-2017, 107CI & 114CI Touring models 2017 to present, 117CI Touring models 2017-2023, all Trikes 2017 to present, all Softails 2018-2024, 121CI Touring models 2023 to present, 117CI Touring models 2024 to present, and all Softail 2025 to present.

Get yours from anywhere that stocks the Zodiac range or **www.zodiac.nl**

Performance Machine.com

FURYGAN STARKER GLOVES

furygan
DRY

These new Starker gloves from Furygan are designed for winter riding, and feature a unique dual lining that has, get this, volcanic dust-derived technology to keep your hands both warm and cool at the same time, as well as a high-quality thermal lining, reinforced leather palms, D3O metacarpal (finger bone) and knuckle protectors, and longer cuffs to keep your wrists warm, and're made of a mix of tough goat leather and man-made fabrics.

They cost £99.99 from anywhere that stocks the Furygan range or **www.furygan.com**

FURYGAN SACRAMENTO BOOTS

Famous in racing circles, Furygan've turned their attention to road riding, and these new D3O-equipped trainer-style boots feature reinforced heels and toes, D3O malleolus (the bony projections with a shape likened to a hammer head on either side of the ankle) protectors, a waterproof and breathable membrane to keep your feet dry and cool, and a suitably contemporary style.

Available in four colourways (grey with white stripes, grey with grey stripes, black with white stripes, and black with grey stripes), and in all the usual sizes, they cost £159.99 from anywhere that stocks the Furygan range or **www.furygan.com**

SOLO HELIX GRIPS

These Solo Design grip sets come in either chrome or black finishes, and fit CVO Touring models 2023 to present, 2024 to present FLHX Street Glide and FLTRX Road Glide, and all Softails 2025 to present.

Get yours from anywhere that stocks the Zodiac range or **www.zodiac.nl**

Letters

NEED TO AGREE, OR EVEN DISAGREE, WITH SOMETHING YOU'VE SEEN IN THE MAG? HEARD A BLOODY AWFUL JOKE YOU THINK WE SHOULD GROAN AT? EMAIL **BACKSTREETHEROESMAG@HOTMAIL.COM** OR SEND IT SNAILMAIL TO THE ADDRESS SOMEWHERE IN THE MAG!

star LETTER

The best letter each month wins a BSH tee-shirt

DEAR BSH,

I read Colin Brown's first MAG article with some interest. Think he'll be a great addition to the mag.
In response to his points, I'd like to put forward my own point of view. I'm not a builder, but've been riding over 40 years now, so here goes. Firstly, just based on my limited experience test-riding a Livewire, I just didn't like it. I found it completely devoid of feedback and soulless – it was hard to tell if it was on or not, it was that quiet. When riding it, I can say, hand on heart, it was the scariest bike I've ever ridden, purely down to the lack of feedback. I struggled to gauge what it was doing and, combined with the fact the acceleration was scary, I just didn't gel with it. The range was about the same as my Sporty, 115 miles, but only if I rode it very carefully – if I rode like I normally do, it would've been significantly less. I didn't get a chance to charge it, but it would've meant hanging about at a charging point, rather than my usual quick fuel stop. Regarding cost, I'd never pay £30 grand on a bike, that's just not practical for me.

On another occasion, I was speaking to a rep for an electric motorcycle company who were doing demo rides to engage interest. The routes picked for riders were very short as, he said, the bikes wouldn't stay charged that long if they were ridden on fast stretches of carriageway. Now that's just plainly not practical. I know bikes don't need to be practical; most of the customs in this magazine aren't, but let's put this in perspective. I ride a 2016 Sportster Iron. It's been mildly customised, and tuned, and due to this the tank range is about 75 miles, but that's not a problem as I can carry a small fuel bottle for use when needed, or can plan my fuel stops. Either way I'm only going to be stopping for a few minutes – not waiting longer for a battery to charge.

For me, the best bit of riding a bike like mine is when you start it – you smell the fuel; you hear the lovely rumble coming through the 'pipes; you can see the engine rocking in the rubber-mounted frame like it's alive. You just can't quantify how good that feels. On the road, you feel everything the bike's doing like it's organic – you're aware of everything. To my mind that makes me more aware of what's around me and, as a result, much safer.

My final point is, how safe is the battery technology? I could be wrong, but it doesn't instil me with confidence. Am I right in thinking there seems to be a lot of electrical vehicle fires being reported? I'd be interesting to see the figures.
I got into bikes at a time when they weren't fashionable, and bikers were generally scorned as a lower life form, so I generally don't believe what governments're telling me, or feel they have my best interests at heart. I don't see electric bikes being something that catches on to any great extent in this lifestyle of ours as, to my mind, they just don't catch attention like a loud, eye-catching custom bike.

I'm sure someone'll build a custom out of one at some point, just because they can, but can't see it being much more than that. And as for rallies and events? Jeez, how many charging points (run by diesel generators) would be needed?

SHAUN FAE FIFE

Eloquently put, Shaun, eloquently put. You best have a teeshirt!

DEAR BSH,

Ariel Hunter – filtering. I am separated from the pack. The herd hasn't noticed yet. I cannot let them know or they will trample me as an obstacle to the stampede rather than a driving force. I command them with gait and presence, my bay flooding their immediate mind with panic. I fly between them without effort in their moments of hesitation. Swiftly, skilfully, when they are restless and irritated from the chase. I travel further in looking for a way out, but the herd is endless and a clean kill impossible without injury on my own. This hunt will last until it ends, it will last until I find the pack.

For now, I will look to thin the herd to gain passage. No meal today, but I'm satisfied with the chase. I will meet you further on the road.

JAMES LINNELL

DEAR BSH,

The letters you keep publishing from James Linnell – I have no idea what he's smoking, but can I have a quarter please?

STEVE

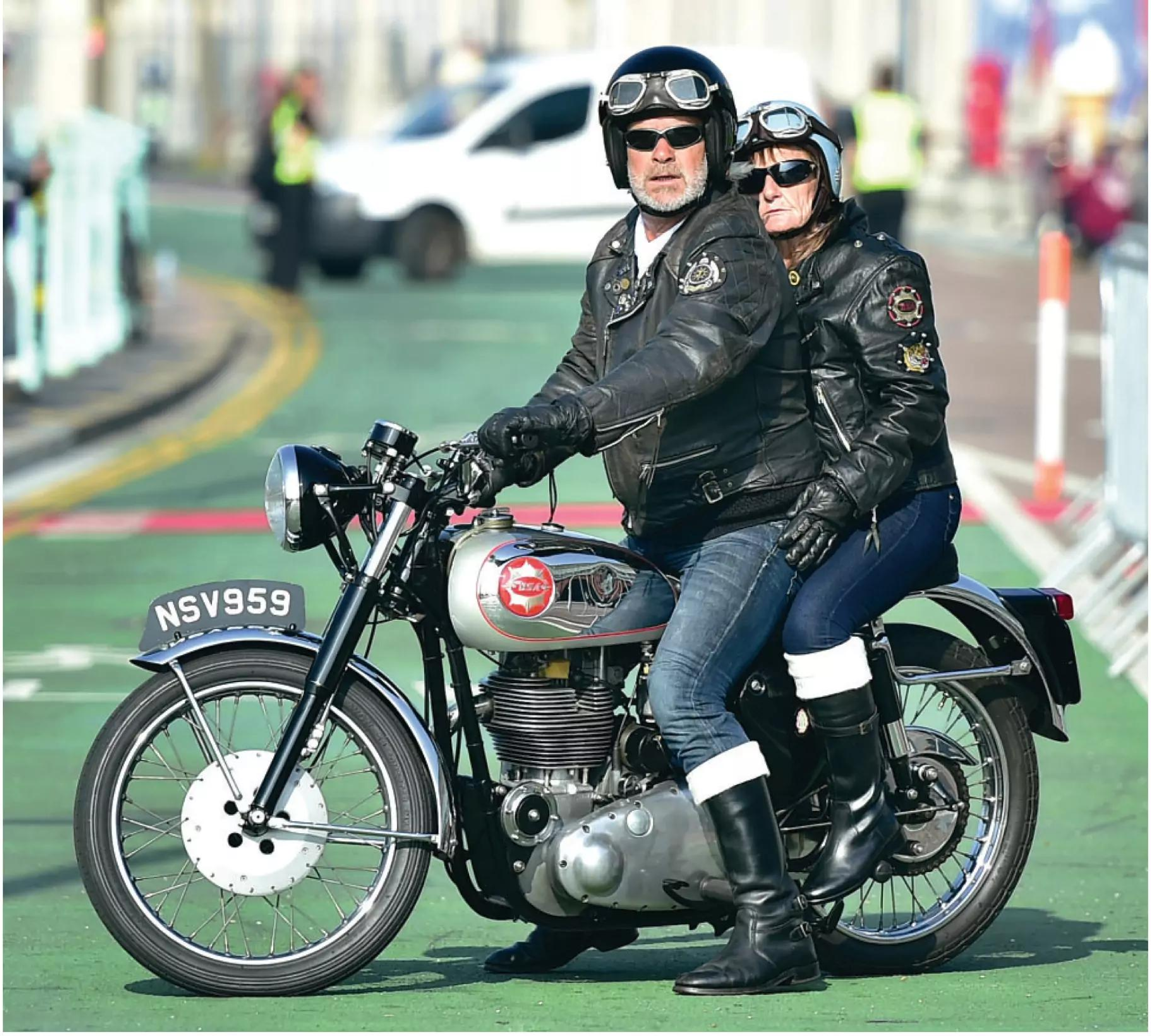
DEAR BSH,

Re: Martin Hosksin's letter about his stolen BSA. Yes indeed, the Police are next to useless when it involves protecting citizens' property, but they're ace when it comes to giving out tickets for small, but legible, numberplates.

A little story here. I was nicked for a black n' white, smaller-than-legal, but clearly legible 'plate a few years back. The fact that it was legible, and he knew I was otherwise legit, licence, insurance, tax, and MoT, didn't stop him giving me a £100 non-endorsable ticket – no warning, just a ticket. Yet, for the last few years, travellers've invaded my seaside town, parking their vans illegally on the front, and removing their number plates – no action whatsoever from the plod, despite them causing trouble, smashing up pubs, and doing runners from restaurants without paying, shoplifting, etc. It seems there's one law for bikers, and another for travellers!

CLIVE U

Always been the case, Clive – I had a very distinctive bike stolen a few years ago and I could see it on a travellers' site. I



DEAR BSH,

My mother-in-law was pictured in the magazine at an event recently, and I was wondering if you could send me a copy as I know she'd love a copy of this framed.

TRICIA KERWIN

Your wish is my command, effendi.

told the Police and they said: "Just claim on your insurance."…

DEAR BSH,

Here's a thing; Last November I had to have my prostrate taken out due to cancer. I first had to meet the pre-op nurse who explained the procedure, and I mentioned motorcycles, MAG, and BSH. "Ahh!" she said, "I'm a member of East Durham bike club."

"I was a founder member," I replied, and we spent the next fifteen minutes talking bikes.

The next day I went for my op', and to meet my surgeon, and I mentioned bikes. "Ahh, I'm from Bologna," he said. "For me it has to be Ducati!" We spent the next ten minutes talking Ducati and 'Moto Gootsie'. Two weeks later I had to have my catheter taken out by a specialist. I mentioned bikes, MAG, and BSH. "Ahh!" he said, "I've just got a Suzuki GSX." The moral of this story is if you need surgery at James Cook Hospital and you want a little extra care, talk about bikes cos the old BSH saying is true: 'Back Street Heroes, there's a lot of us about.'

RAY GALLAGHER

Oh, I see, it's you holding up the queues for waiting lists, is it, talking about bloody motorbikes? Seriously, apologies for the length of time it's taken to get your letter in – I couldn't read your handwriting!

The Original Custom Bike Magazine
BACK STREET HEROES
FEB 2025
ISSUE #490
£5.20
THE HOOK UP CHOPPER SHOW
RAT & SURVIVAL
THREE BSH CUSTOM SHOWS
SUBLIME MZ (HONESTLY)
VINTAGE-STYLE PAN
RIGID BANDIT 'FIGHTER
SURVIVOR NORTON
SWOOPY SEASIDE TWIN CAM

DEAR BSH,

I don't always agree with everything that Neil Liversidge of MAG says, but at least he's saying it and speaking up, potentially for a silent majority, which is surely better than saying nothing, allowing the unthinkable to happen.

Anyway, I just wanted to say how much I loved reading of the Chinese proverb he quoted in issue 492: Those who say it cannot be done should get out of the way of the people doing it. I would like to add a saying from a rather brilliant woman I know (shout out to Clare): If what you want doesn't exist, create it.

Enuff philosophy, great mag, keep it going. Love, peace, wotever.

PETRENELLA HUTCHINSON

Sorry, another one it took me a while to figure out the handwriting…

DEAR BSH,

Please may we have a write-up on the awesome Harley on the front page of BSH 490, Feb 2025? It really needs to be in the mag!

Keep up the ace work.

ELLEN

The esteemed Mr Hickey is, apparently, on the case.

AUTOJUMBLE.INFO
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WHAT'S COMING UP IN THE AUTOJUMBLE CALENDAR?

'NORMOUS NEWARK AUTOJUMBLE
NEWARK SHOWGROUND, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, NG24 2NY
NOV 16, 2025
JAN 26, 2026
• ADVANCE TICKETS ON SALE NOW
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• EARLY BIRD ADVANCE (FROM 8:00AM) - £9
• UNDER 16S FREE
newarkautojumble.co.uk

Kempton AUTOJUMBLE
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OCT 25, 2025
DEC 6, 2025
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• STANDARD ADVANCE (FROM 9:30AM) - £6
• EARLY BIRD ADVANCE (FROM 8:00AM) - £9
• UNDER 16S FREE
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STRATFORD-UPON-AVON RACECOURSE, WARWICKSHIRE, CV37 9SE
MAY 10, 2026
• ADVANCE TICKETS ON SALE NOW
• ADULT ADVANCE - £5
• UNDER 16S FREE
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AUTOJUMBLE.INFO

Events

ADVERTISE YOUR EVENTS HERE FOR FREE AND GET THEM SEEN BY EVERYONE IN BIKERDOM! EMAIL THE INFO TO **BACKSTREETHEROESMAG@HOTMAIL.COM**

NOVEMBER

1 Nov: Unwanted MCC's Halloween Party at The Rockbar, Shobnall Sports & Social Club, Shobnall Road, Burton on Trent, Staffs (DE14 2BB). Tickets £10 prebook or £12 on door. More info' from 07988 560090 or www.unwantedmcc.co.uk

2 Nov: Ton Up Day & 59 Club at the Ace Cafe, London. More info' from www.london.acecafe.com

7-10 Nov: Rockers Reunited's Rock Festival at The Prince of Wales, Lord St, Southport, Merseyside (PR8 1JS). More info' from www.rockersreunited.co.uk

9 Nov: Poppy Day Parade & Service/Military Vehicle Meet at the Ace Cafe, London. More info' from www.london.acecafe.com

9 Nov: Isle of Sheppey Ride of Respect from the Shell Garage, London Road, Wrotham Heath, Kent (TN15 7RX) at 9am. More info' from Facebook.

9 Nov: Desert Rats Ride of Respect at the Tank Memorial, High Ash, near Mundford, Norfolk (IP27 0PX). More info' from Facebook.

9 Nov: Portsmouth Ride of Respect from Northside Lake Harbour Business Park, Western Rd, Cosham, Hants (PO6 3EN) at 9am. More info' from Facebook.

16 Nov: Bike Day at the Ace Cafe, London. More info' from www.london.acecafe.com

16 Nov: Normous Newark Autojumble at The Showground, Drove Lane, Winthorpe, Newark, Notts (NG24 2NY). More info' from www.newarkautojumble.co.uk

23 Nov: Ariel OC Founders Day & Classic Bikes at the Ace Cafe, London. More info' from www.london.acecafe.com

23 Nov: Notts TOMCC's Bottesford Toy Run from The Rutland Arms, High Street, Bottesford, Notts (NG13 0AA) at 9am. More info' from 07790 583062 or Facebook.

28-30 Nov: Custombike Germany at Messe Bad Saluzen, Germany. More info' from www.custombike-show.de

29 Nov: Santa Bikes' Christmas Toy Run from The Grove, Merrydale Rd, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs (DE15 9DQ) at 10am. Tickets £5. More info' from Facebook.

30 Nov: Mud Pluggers Day at the Ace Cafe, London. More info' from www.london.acecafe.com

30 Nov: Salvation Army Toy Run from The Waggon & Horses, Gypsy Lane, Bleasby, Notts (NG14 7GG) at 9.30am. More info' from Facebook.

DECEMBER

5-7 Dec: Druids MCC's Icy Ale Rally at a site in Lincs. Tickets £25 prebook only. More info' from www.druidsmcc.com or Facebook.

6 Dec: London Classic Bike Show at Kempton Park, Staines Road East, Sunbury on Thames, Middlesex (TW16 5AQ). More info' from www.kemptonautojumble.co.uk

6 Dec: Snatch MCC's Christmas Party at the Lyceum Club, Bath St, Port Sunlight, Merseyside (CH62 4UJ). More info' from Facebook.

6 Dec: Santa's on a Bike Toy Run from Winterbourne Academy, High St, Winterbourne, Bristol (BS36 1JL) at 10am. More info' from Facebook.

7 Dec: Ace Cafe Club Day Xmas Meet at the Ace Cafe, London. More info' from www.london.acecafe.com

7 Dec: Unwanted MCC's Toy Run from Marston's Club, Shobnall Sports & Social Club, Shobnall Road, Burton on Trent, Staffs (DE14 2BG). More info' from 07988 560090 or www.unwantedmcc.co.uk

7 Dec: Black Shuck MCC's Toy Run from The Smock, Maidenhall Approach, Ipswich, Suffolk (IP2 8PG) at 9.30am. More info' from Facebook.

7 Dec: Whitstable Toy Run from the Tankerton Road Carpark, Tankerton Road, Whitstable, Kent (CT5 2AS) at 11am. More info' from Facebook.

7 Dec: Christmas Hamper Run from The White Post, Ollerton Road, Farnsfield, Notts (NG22 8HN) at 10am. More info' from 07875 131417 or Facebook.

13 Dec: 3 Amigos' Christmas Toy Run from The Commons Car Park, Common Road, Pembroke, Wales (SA71 4EA) at noon. More info' from 07515 631554 or Facebook.

14 Dec: Xmas Toy Run at the Ace Cafe, London. More info' from www.london.acecafe.com

14 Dec: Xmas Carol Service at the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

14 Dec: Christmas Hamper Run from outside Next, Giltbrook Shopping Park, Ikea Way, Giltbrook, Notts (NG16 2RP) at 1pm. More info' from Facebook.

20 Dec: 4Fs MCC's Fancy Dress Christmas Party at Trimley Sports & Social Club, High Rd, Trimley St Martin, Suffolk (IP11 0RJ). More info' from Facebook.

21 Dec: Bike Day at the Ace Cafe, London. More info' from www.london.acecafe.com

26 Dec: Cold Turkey Meet at the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

28 Dec: Bike Day at the Ace Cafe, London. More info' from www.london.acecafe.com

2026

JANUARY

10 Jan: Blacktop Kings Indoor Custom Show at the South of England Showground, Selsfield Rd, Haywards Heath, W. Sussex (RH17 6TL). More info' from Facebook.

10 Jan: Pissed & Confused MCC's Late Christmas Party at Little Waltham Sports & Social Club, Tufnell Hall, The Street, Little Waltham, Essex (CM3 3NY). More info' from Facebook.

23-25 Jan: Ogri MCC's Kickstart Rally at the Ogri Clubhouse, Kemble Airfield, Kemble, Gloucs (GL7 6BQ). More info' from www.ogrimcc.org or Facebook.

24 Jan: Rockers Reunion Winter Party at The Empire, High St, Aldershot, Hamps (GU11 1DJ). More info’ from Facebook.

MARCH

7-8 March: Scottish Motorcycle Show at the Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston Rd, Ingliston, Newbridge, Edinburgh (EH28 8NB). More info’ from www.thescottishmotorcycleshow.com

28 March: VMCC Somerset Autojumble at Winchester Farm, Draycott Rd, Cheddar, Somerset (BS27 3RP). More info’ from Facebook.

29 March: Elk Promotions’ Classic Bike Show & Autojumble at the South of England Showground, Selsfield Rd, Ardingly, W. Sussex (RH17 6T). More info’ from www.elkpromotions.co.uk

29 March: Spring Shakedown at Melbourne Raceway, Ash Ln, Melbourne, Yorks (YO42 4SS). More info’ from www.straightliners.events

APRIL

6 April: Elk Promotions’ Classic Bike Show & Autojumble at the Ashford Livestock Market, Orbital Park, Ashford, Kent (TN24 0HB). More info’ from www.elkpromotions.co.uk

10-12 April: Matt Black Rat Spring Meet at Castle Cary RFC, Brook House Field, off Station Road, Castle Cary, Somerset (BA7 7PF). Tickets £20. More info’ from Facebook.

11-12 April: Spring Nationals at Melbourne Raceway, Ash Ln, Melbourne, Yorks (YO42 4SS). More info’ from www.straightliners.events

MAY

1-3 May: Into The Valley at the Driffield Showground, Driffield Road, Kelleythorpe, E. Yorks (YO25 9FB). More info’ from www.mapevents.co.uk

3 May: Beer, Bikes & Bands at The Barrel, The Appleyard, Kenninghall Rd, Banham, Norfolk (NR16 2HE). More info’ from Facebook.

9-10 May: Melbourne Mayhem at Melbourne Raceway, Ash Ln, Melbourne, Yorks (YO42 4SS). More info’ from www.straightliners.events

17 May: The Distinguished Gentleman’s Ride. More info’ from www.gentlemansride.com

17 May: Mods & Rockers at Ivychurch Road, Brenzett, Kent (TN29 0EE). Tickets £10. More info’ from 07835 917594 or events@rmwcollection.co.uk

20-24 May: FH-DCE Super Rally at Fredericia, Denmark. More info’ from www.superrally.dk

24 May: Bideford Bike Show at Victoria Park, Bideford, Devon (EX39 2QL). More info’ from www.bidefordbikeshow.org

25 May: Elk Promotions’ Classic Bike Show & Autojumble at the Ashford Livestock Market, Orbital Park, Ashford, Kent (TN24 0HB). More info’ from www.elkpromotions.co.uk

29-31 May: The Potts Bike Bash at Castle Cary RFC, Brook House Field, off Station Road, Castle Cary, Somerset (BA7 7PF). Tickets £20 prebook or £25 on gate. More info’ from Facebook.

JUNE

6-7 June: Street Weekend at Melbourne Raceway, Ash Ln, Melbourne, Yorks (YO42 4SS). More info’ from www.straightliners.events

14 June: Vintage, Classic & Retro Motorcycle Show at St Peter’s College, Summerhill Heights, Townparks, Wexford, Ireland (Y35 P8WT). More info’ from 00353 8766 78566 or Facebook.

14 June: West Somerset Motorcycle Show & Autojumble at Minehead Barbarians RFC, Ellicombe Lane, Minehead, Somerset (TA24 6TR). More info’ from Facebook.

17 June: Royston & District MCC’s Show at the Eternit Sports & Social Club, Whaddon Rd, Meldreth, Herts (SG8 5RL). More info’ from Facebook.

18-21 June: Estonians MCC’s Barnstormer Rally at a site in Runswick Bay, North Yorkshire (TS13 5HR). Tickets £20 prebook or £25 on gate. More info’ from 07533 204101 or Estoniansmcc@outlook.co.uk

18-21 June: Farmyard Party at Duncombe Park, Helmsley, N. Yorks. More info’ from www.farmyardparty.com

19-21 June: Pissed & Confused MCC’s Summer Rally at Little Waltham Sports & Social Club, Tufnell Hall, The Street, Little Waltham, Essex (CM3 3NY). More info’ from Facebook.

19-21 June: Dorset Bikefest at Wooders Campsite, Sugar Hill, Wareham, Dorset (BH20 7NN). More info’ from Facebook.

JULY

3-5 July: Chinnor Bike Dayz at a new site. More info’ from Facebook.

3-5 July: MPH Vintage Hot Rod & Bike Drags at Deenethorpe Airfield, near Corby (NN17 3AN). More info’ from www.mphvintagesprint.co.uk

3-5 July: QRRA One Aim Rally at QRRA Rehabilitation Centre, Kennels Field, Homestall Rd, Faversham, Kent (ME9 0BE). More info’ from www.qrra.co.uk

3-5 July: Royal Naval Vets MCC/Independents MCC’s Rumconscious Rally at Berkeley Farm, Durley Street, Durley Hamps (S032 2AB), More info’ from Facebook.

5 July: Ride for Autism from Ryka’s Café, Old London Rd, Dorking, Surrey (RH5 6BY) at 11am. More info’ from Facebook.

9-12 July: Southern Comfort V-Max Rally at Lodsworth Village Hall, Heath End Ln, Lodsworth, W. Sussex (GU28 9BY). More info’ from Facebook.

11-12 July: Jet Fest at Melbourne Raceway, Ash Ln, Melbourne, Yorks (YO42 4SS). More info’ from www.straightliners.events

16-19 July: Moto Clube Faro’s Concentracion at Faro, Portugal. More info’ from www.motoclubefaro.pt

17-19 July: Halfway Heroes MCC’s Leathered in Lincs Rally at The Heneage Arms, Louth Rd, Hainton, Lincs (LN8 6LX). Tickets £25 prebook or £30 on gate. More info’ from www.halfway-heroes.co.uk

26 July: Elk Promotions’ Classic Bike Show & Autojumble at the South of England Showground, Selsfield Rd, Ardingly, W. Sussex (RH17 6T). More info’ from www.elkpromotions.co.uk

AUGUST

6-9 Aug: Oddballs SC’s Rally at Abingdon RFC, Southern Sports Park, Lambrick Way, Abingdon, Oxon (OX14 5TJ). More info’ from Facebook.

8-9 Aug: Summer Nationals at Melbourne Raceway, Ash Ln, Melbourne, Yorks (YO42 4SS). More info’ from www.straightliners.events

13-15 Aug: Worcester Rally & Custom Show at a site in Worcs. More info’ from www.worcesterrallyandcustomshow.co.uk

27-30 Aug: Geordie HOG’s Heart & Soul Rally at Morpeth RFC, Mitford Rd, Morpeth, Northumberland (NE61 1RJ). More info’ from www.geordiehog.com

SEPT

4-6 Sept: Stormin’ the Castle at Witton Castle, Sloshes Ln, Witton-le-Wear, County Durham (DL14 0DE). More info’ from www.storminthecastle.co.uk

5-6 Sept: Bracket Bonanza at Melbourne Raceway, Ash Ln, Melbourne, Yorks (YO42 4SS). More info’ from www.straightliners.events

27 Sept: Worship Moto Show at Left Bank Leeds, Cardigan Rd, Burley, Leeds (LS6 1LJ). More info’ from www.worshipmotoshow.com

OCTOBER

3 Oct: VMCC Somerset Autojumble at Winchester Farm, Draycott Rd, Cheddar, Somerset (BS27 3RP). More info’ from Facebook.

3-4 Oct: Fireworks Finale at Melbourne Raceway, Ash Ln, Melbourne, Yorks (YO42 4SS). More info’ from www.straightliners.events

25 Oct: Elk Promotions’ Classic Bike Show & Autojumble at the South of England Showground, Selsfield Rd, Ardingly, W. Sussex (RH17 6T). More info’ from www.elkpromotions.co.uk

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Readers' Lives

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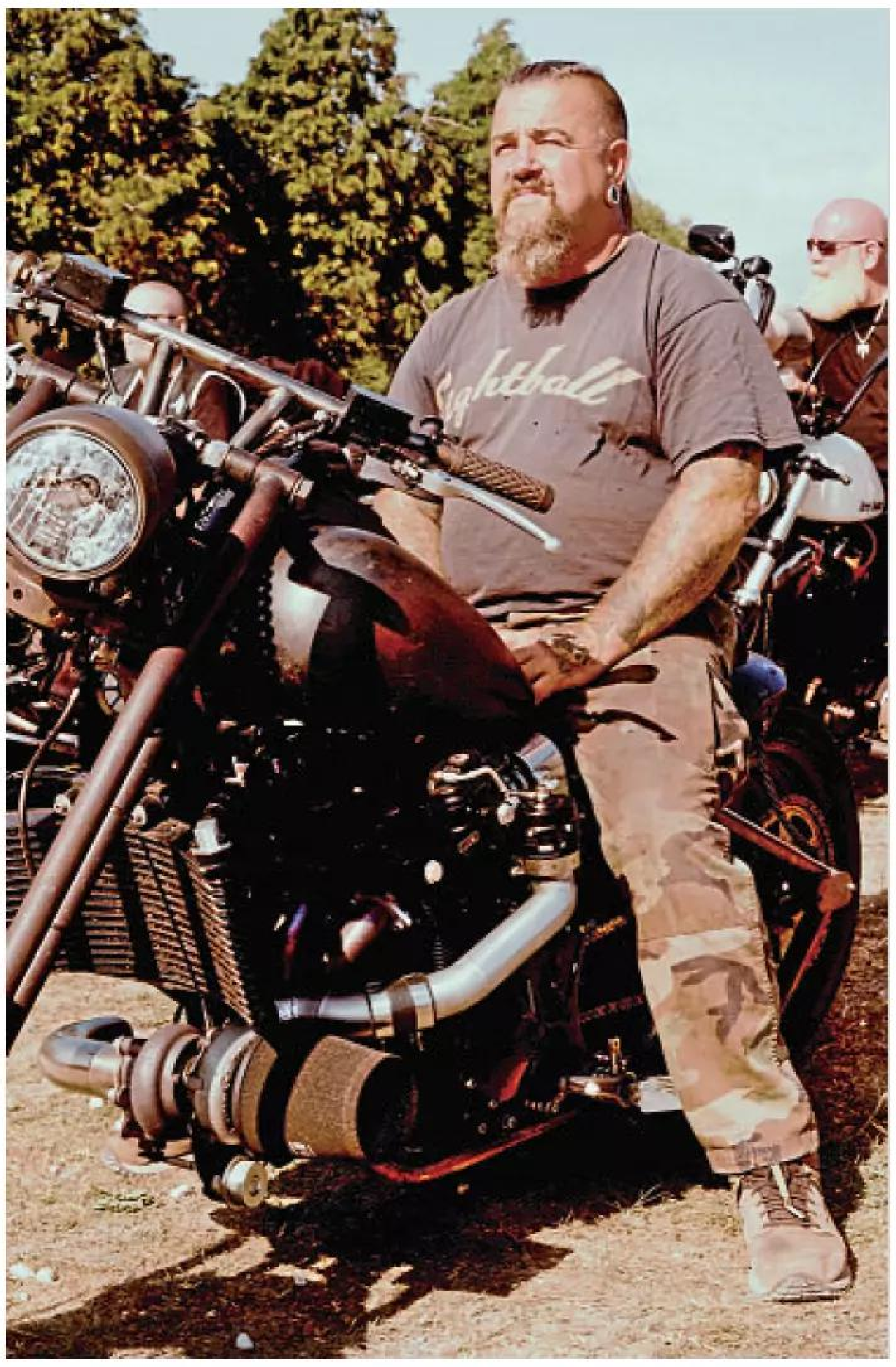

ABOVE: 'nother nice riding pic by Ian Evans

LEFT: Cool pic of a gentleman & his turbo at NCC Dorset by John Boyle

RIGHT: Here's trouble! Kirsty, Paula, Jacqui & Jax bringing a touch of sophistication & panache to the Farmyard. Pic by John

BELOW: Kenny Ross at his spiritual home

ABOVE: Meeting of Diesel Joe's and Andy S's 500 Bullets at the Kilmarnock Tigers show – that poor grass underneath them!

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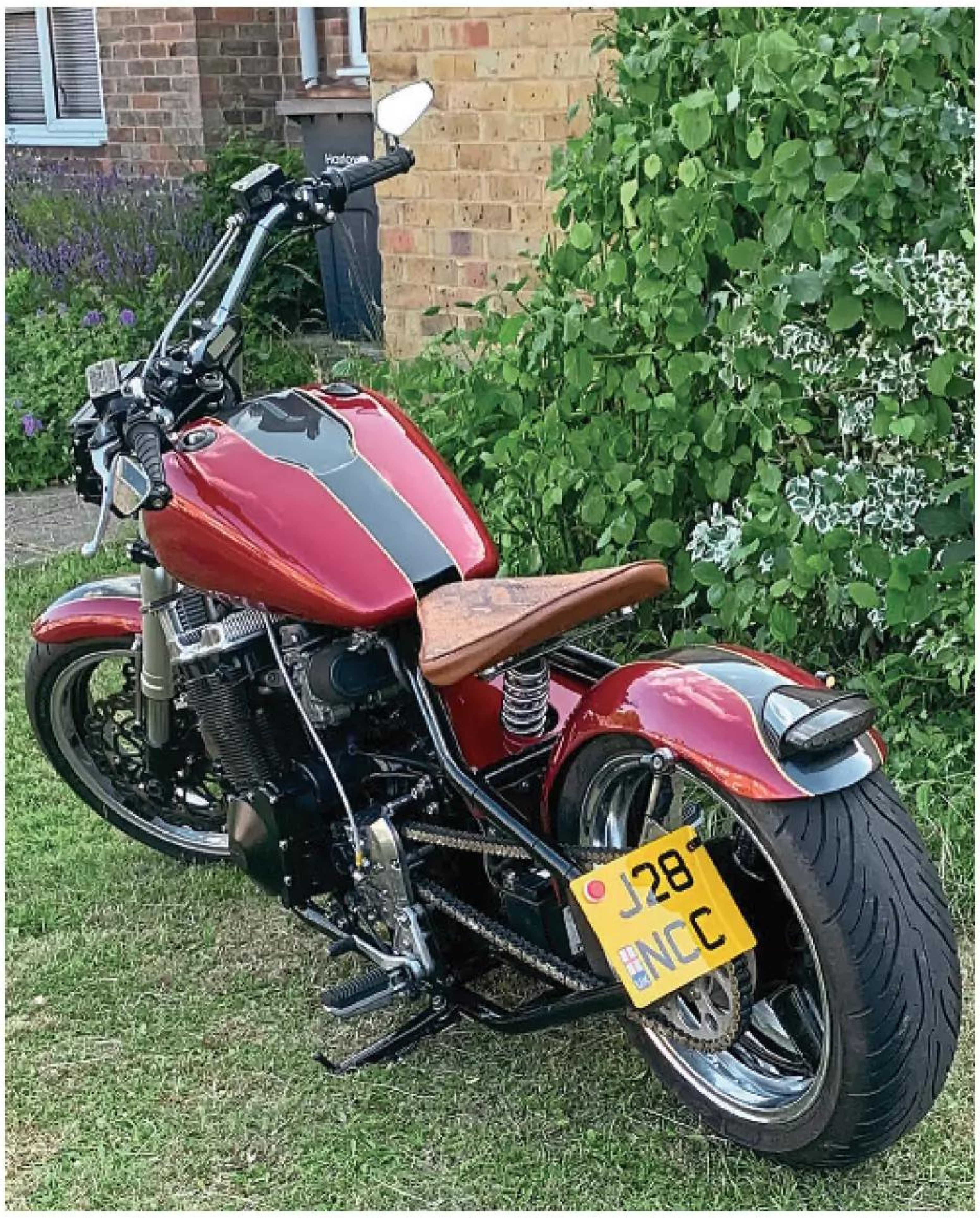
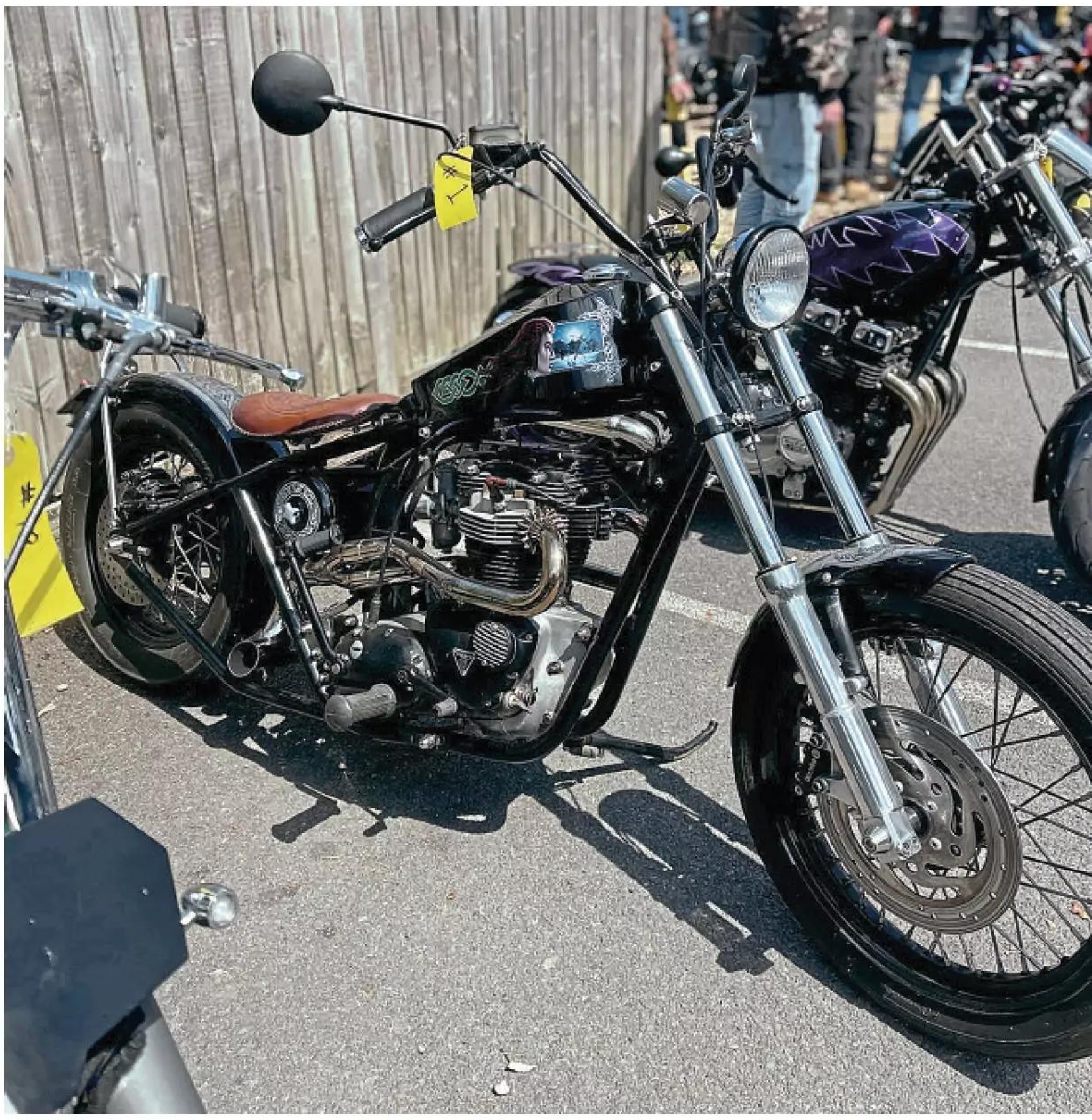


ABOVE: Jay from NCC Herts' HUC 1200 – a classic example of the breed

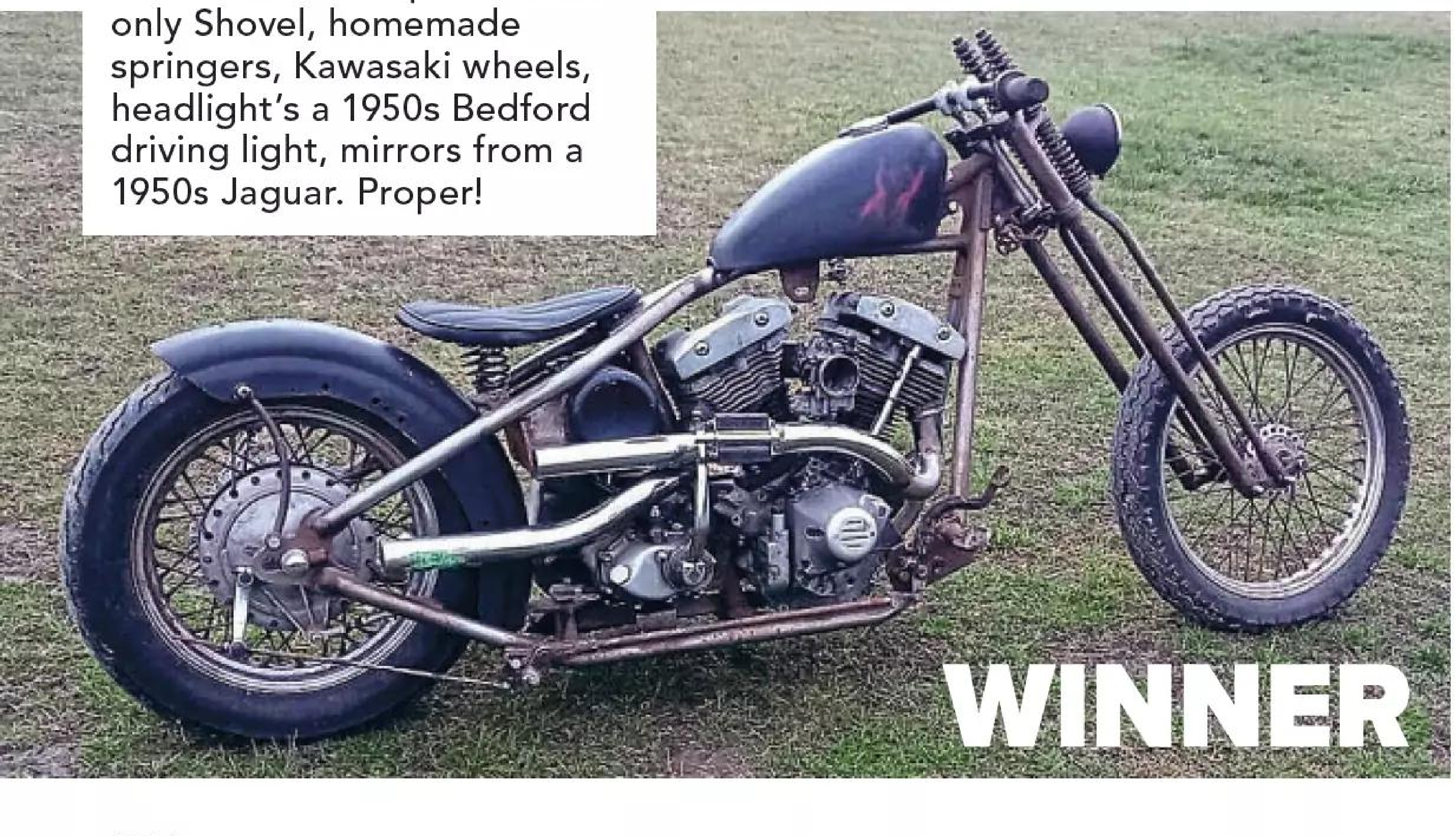


ABOVE: "The sweetest bike on the day, at the Musos' show" says Clive (ex-BSH feature bike, Clive)

GROWING OLD DISGRACEFULLY
BOOTS

LEFT: Who'd've thought it? The old reprobate, Boots himself, made it to 70!

BELOW: Shane's Mongrel – 1980 80-cube 4-speed kicker-only Shovel, homemade springers, Kawasaki wheels, headlight's a 1950s Bedford driving light, mirrors from a 1950s Jaguar. Proper!



BELOW: Dapper gents on the Bishops Stortford DGR. Pic by Trev D

Gibby's Lives

Pics from The Earsham Queen,
a very cool biker-friendly pub

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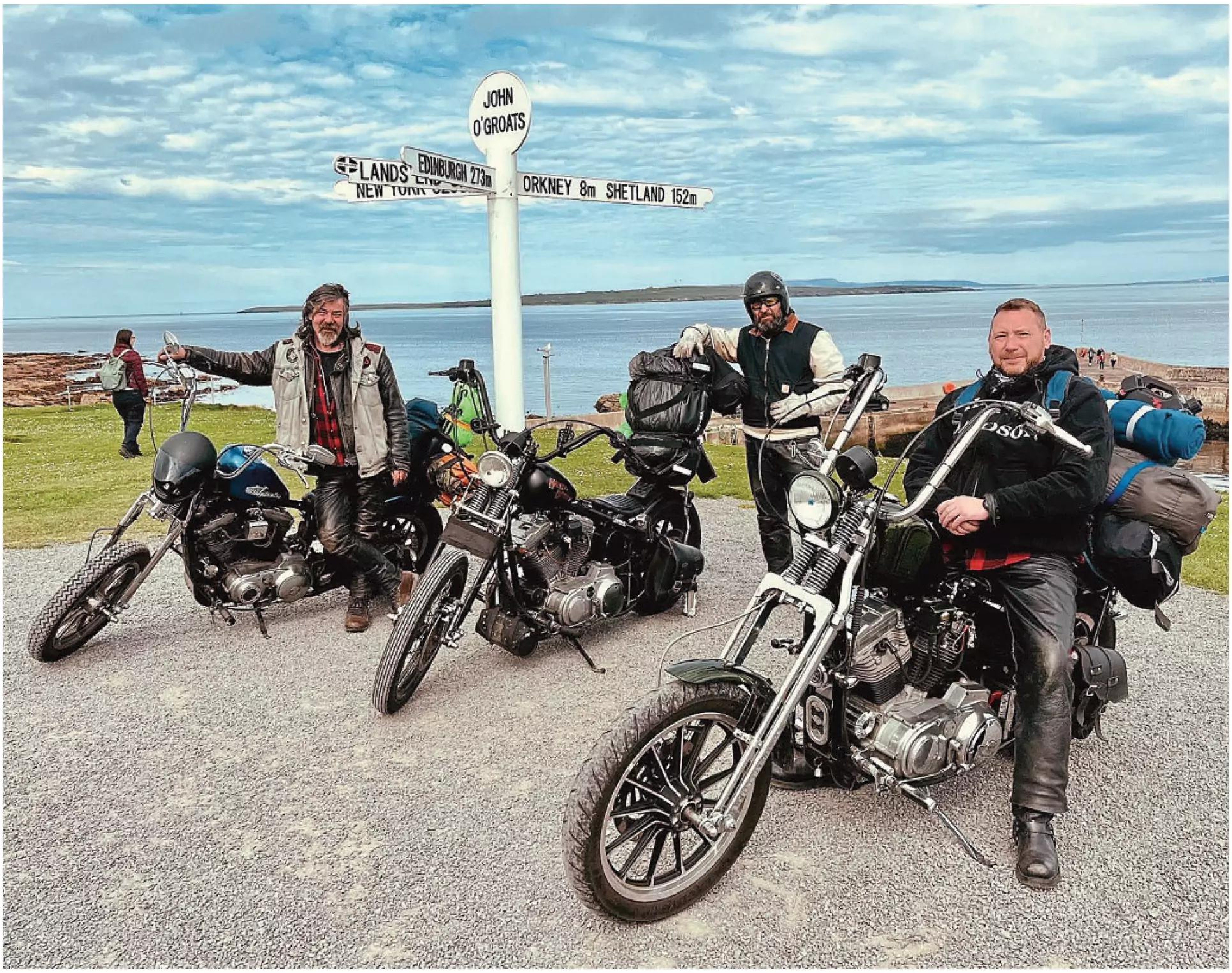
Chops round Scotland

Back in May, a bunch of mates from Northern Ireland on chops – Fonzy on his Sportster, Garrett (Paddy O'File) on his Sporty, Chris on another Sportster, and Johnny on a strutted Yamaha XV1100 (and Chris' half-sister Jane on her Cagiva Raptor) – left Belfast on the ferry to Cairnryan (Stranraer). On the first day they went up through Glencoe and camped at Loch Levin; on the second day they stopped at Loch Ness and then headed up the east coast, winding up at Wick; on the third day they stopped at John O'Groates, headed along the north coast through the mountains to Scourie; on the fourth they set off down the west coast, past Ullapool and Kinlochewe, and camped at Torridon; on the fifth they did the Applecross pass, crossed on to the Isle of Skye, and ended up camping at the north of the island in Uig; on the sixth they headed back down through Glencoe and camped at the back of a hotel near Loch Lomond after being refused entry to a number of campsites; and then, on their last day, rode back to Cairnryan and crossed back to Belfast.

"We had sunshine all the way," says Fonzy. "Lucky b*st*rds, eh?"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Motorcycle Action Group

WHAT DO YOU WANT US TO DO ABOUT IT?

Right, here's something that's been doing my head in. I'm sitting in a meeting with the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and we're making progress, having a decent conversation about how motorcycles can help solve congestion problems, when the Mayor's policy advisor pipes up with: "I guess you have an image problem though as well, don't you?"

And there it is. The conversation killer. The excuse. The reason why everything we argue for, the evidence, the data, the practical benefits, suddenly doesn't matter any more. I gave the standard response. Yes, there's an image problem, but it's an image problem, not a reality problem. You get idiots on bikes, same as you get idiots in cars, and on pushbikes – idiocy isn't transport-mode specific. The Mayor nodded, we moved on and, actually, the meeting went well, and he's promised to look at including motorcycles properly in his transport strategy, but that comment stuck with me, because it always does.

Let's be honest about what we're dealing with. When transport planners and politicians think 'motorcyclist', they're not picturing you carefully building a bobber in your garage. They're picturing ASBO youths doing wheelies through town centres. Never mind that most of us're just trying to get from A to B without sitting in traffic for two hours; never mind that we take up less road space, cause less congestion, and cost less in infrastructure than cars – the image is the image, and apparently that's all that matters when it comes to transport policy. Of course, the image problem only seems to matter when it suits them. When local authorities want to ban bikes from city centres, or refuse us access to bus lanes, suddenly we're dangerous hooligans with an image problem, but when they want to introduce parking charges, or boost the local tourist economy, somehow our image isn't bad enough to stop them taking our money, is it?

And let's talk about evidence. We've got the most skin in the game when it comes to road safety, yet they lecture us about our image problem while giving cyclists free reign in bus lanes because, apparently, being overtaken by a bus is fine, but being overtaken by a motorcycle is terrifying. The logic doesn't hold up, but the image problem excuse does its job – it stops the conversation dead.

So here's where I need your input, because this's what MAG's about – representing what you lot actually think, not what I reckon in isolation. When I'm sitting in those meetings and someone plays the image card, how do you want me to respond? Do you want me to push back harder, point out that every transport mode has idiots and, maybe, we should focus on the evidence instead of stereotypes? Should I call it out for what it is – judging an entire group based on the actions of a minority which, in any other context, would be called bigotry? Should I acknowledge it quickly and pivot straight back to the practical benefits – congestion reduction, parking efficiency, all the stuff that actually matters for transport planning? Or is there something else entirely that you reckon would work better?

Let me be clear about one thing: we're never going to apologise for who we are. This magazine exists because motorcycling's about freedom, individuality, and building something that's yours. The second we start acting like we need to be ashamed of riding, we've lost, but there's a difference between apologising and finding the right way to cut through the bollocks and get officials to focus on what matters.

Someone needs to be in those meetings. That's our job – getting riders' actual experiences into the rooms where these decisions get made. We're not policy wonks in suits, we're riders who understand both bikes and how to talk to officials who don't. And, honestly, most meetings go better than you'd think. This one ended with the Mayor saying: "You seem like a good man, Colin," which, let's be honest, is not how most meetings with politicians end. He promised real action, put us in touch with the right people, but even with someone sympathetic, that image problem comment hangs in the air. It's always there, waiting to derail things.

I've been doing this for a decade now, and I've tried different approaches: sometimes pushing back hard works; sometimes acknowledging it briefly and moving on works better; sometimes you can turn it around – yeah, we've got an image problem, which is exactly why good transport policy matters, because when you give people practical alternatives to sitting in traffic, they don't need to ride like idiots to save time. What works depends on who's in the room, and what mood they're in. Here's the thing, though. Whatever image motorcycling has in the minds of transport planners, it's built by every one of us every time we ride. I can sit in meetings and make rational arguments until I'm blue in the face, but if the only bikes they ever notice are the ones screaming through town at midnight, that's the image that sticks. And I can't change that on my own. None of us can.

So, this is a genuine question for you lot. How do you want your representatives in these meetings to handle the image problem excuse when it gets thrown at us? Because we're going to keep having these meetings; keep making the case for sensible motorcycle policy; keep pushing for things like bus lane access and proper parking provision; and that comment, or some variation of it, is going to keep coming up. What's the response that represents your view? What do you want us to say when someone tries to shut down the conversation with: "Yeah, but motorcyclists have a bad image"? Let me know because, at the end of the day, that's what we're there for – taking your voice into those rooms and making sure someone's arguing for policies that actually work for riders instead of against us.

COLIN BROWN
DIRECTOR OF CAMPAIGNS & POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

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devil’s advocate

/dev.əlz ’æd.və.kət/

> *A person who expresses an opinion that disagrees with others so that there’ll be an interesting discussion about an issue – teachers often play devil’s advocate to provoke discussion in the classroom.*

I’VE SEEN A NUMBER OF DISAPPOINTED AND, QUITE FRANKLY, DISGRUNTLED PEOPLE THIS YEAR. AT FIRST, I OBVIOUSLY WORKED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT I MYSELF WAS THE COMMON DENOMINATOR, AND THEREFORE, THE MOST LIKELY REASON THESE PEOPLE LOOKED LIKE THEY DID. SURPRISINGLY, THAT THEORY PROVED TO BE WRONG THOUGH, AND THE CAUSE OF THE LONG FACES AND QUIVERING BOTTOM LIPS WAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ME AT ALL.

Miss World and the Best Potato competition at the local fete (maybe there’s not as much of a difference between those two as you might first think?) are very much like bike shows. You see, the winners and, subsequently, losers are determined solely on preference, taste, and possibly even whether your face fits or, more precisely in our case, whether your bike does. I’ve had it happen to me on occasion. You arrive in a car park, field, or other venue, and a quick walk round leaves you wondering quite how you’re going to squeeze a two-foot-tall trophy down your jacket. The conclusion you’ve reached isn’t founded in arrogance, cockiness, or even blinding delusion, but simple and, to many, undeniable fact. Yet, your worries about how to pack that twenty-four inches of chrome-plated plastic vanish, poof, just like that the moment the winners are announced.

Obviously, good manners and decorum lead you to wipe the look of utter disbelief from your face as quickly as you can, but the question, ‘WTF just happened?’ remains. It’s a question that’ll circle round your head until eventually you come to terms with it; in most instances that could be a good two or three days, but I’ve known severe cases lasting months and, occasionally, even years.

We should remember that everyone’s in a similar vessel though, and we’re all at the mercy of those same personal likes and, ultimately, dislikes. No matter how bonny your Bonnie is, you’re going home with nowt if the judge once had an unpleasant experience with a Tiger Cub and now harbours a dislike of anything to ever leave Meriden. If the judge’s swayed by the glitz and glamour of three grand’s worth of murals and gold leaf, rather than the nuts and bolts of clever engineering, then your supercharged Z1 is always gonna lose out to that nearly standard, but lavishly painted, bagger. I’m afraid that’s simply the nature of bike shows, and homegrown produce competitions the world over, and if we choose to enter, then we must also accept that caveat.

Despite what you’ve just read, I do actually have a few trophies. They sit on a shelf in the workshop gathering spiders and dust, and beside the plaques and cups is my most prized. It’s a yellow badge with a star on it – it’s small and seemingly insignificant but, somehow, more special than the rest because of how I obtained it. That little badge wasn’t given to me because my preferences aligned with someone else’s; I didn’t get it because my bike mirrored the ideals of another; and it certainly didn’t come my way because my face fitted. No, I got that badge through skill, merit, and because I was the first person to make it the full twenty yards without my egg falling off the spoon, and no one can argue with that or ever take it away, can they?

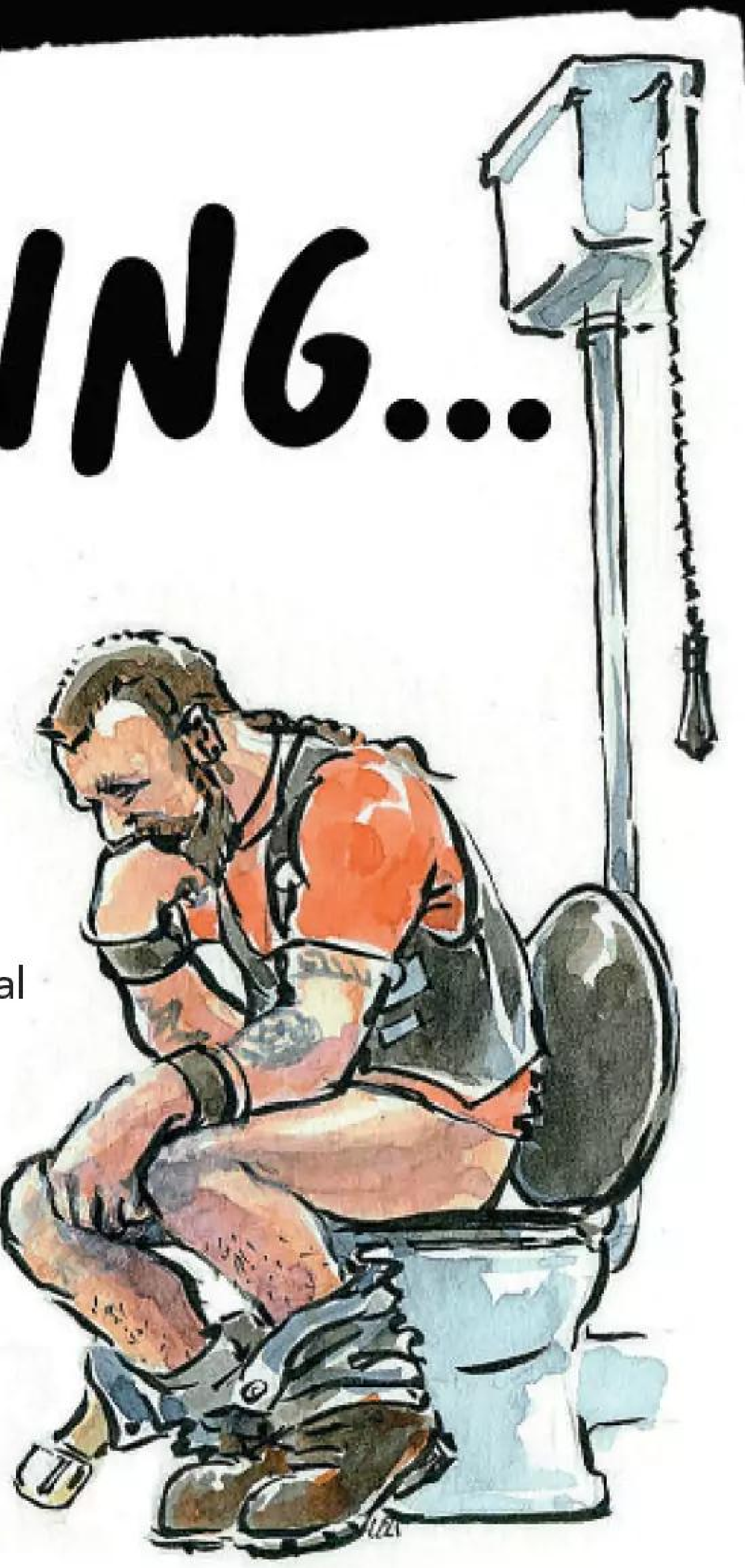
If you’ve been affected by the issues raised in this month’s piece, then please don’t despair – try to focus on the positive. At the time, it might feel like you’ve just received a well-aimed size ten straight to the knackers, but that nauseous feeling won’t last forever. If it helps, then don’t think of it as losing; instead, just think of it as not winning the approval of someone whose opinion you wouldn’t give a toss about under any and all other circumstances.

NORM

REMINISCING...

MOTORCYCLING, SUBCULTURE & IDENTITY

A REFLECTION FROM 1970s SCOTLAND



INTRODUCTION

Motorcycling in post-war Britain has long been associated with youth subcultures, resistance to mainstream norms, and the creation of alternative communities. The 1970s in particular marked a period when economic restructuring, generational tensions and cultural hybridisation shaped working-class youth identities (Hall & Jefferson, 1976).

This essay draws upon lived experience to analyse the significance of motorcycling in Edinburgh during the late 1970s. By situating personal memories within broader theoretical frameworks, it argues that motorcycling functioned as both a form of rebellion and a site of identity construction, echoing Maz Harris' (1985) and Stuart Hall's (1990) analyses of subculture and cultural identity.

EARLY ENCOUNTERS & CULTURAL INITIATION

My initiation into motorcycling began with exposure to a Honda TL125 trials bike. This encounter exemplifies what Harris (1985) describes as the 'seductive entry point' into biking culture, where machines operate not merely as transport but as cultural artefacts symbolising independence. Ownership of a moped at age sixteen, despite parental opposition, reflected the generational conflicts that Hall and Jefferson (1976) identified in their classic work Resistance Through Rituals – motorcycles became a material form of resistance, embodying autonomy from family and school structures.

APPRENTICESHIP, CONSUMPTION & INFORMAL ECONOMIES

Working as an apprentice diesel fitter exposed me to networks of fellow enthusiasts, where the exchange of knowledge around machines mirrored what Hall (1990) terms the construction of 'new identities through discourse'. Learning about hire purchase agreements and insurance rituals illustrates how working-class youth navigated economic constraints through creative adaptation. These practices resonate with Harris' (1985) observation that motorcycling communities often developed parallel economies – informal, flexible and resistant to mainstream consumerist norms.

SUBCULTURE, FELLOWSHIP & IDENTITY FORMATION

Edinburgh's biker spaces, shops, pubs such as the Weigh Inn, and the iconic backdrop of Princes Street, were central to identity formation. Here, as Cohen (1972) would argue, a subculture emerged to provide meaning where mainstream society offered little. Riders from diverse social positions found commonality in motorcycles, forming what Harris (1985) identified as a 'mechanical fraternity' bound by shared risk, passion and resistance.

Literature also played a role in shaping collective imaginaries. Circulating copies of Thompson's Hell's Angels and Mandelkau's Buttons functioned as what Hall (1990) would call 'cultural texts', through which British bikers negotiated their own identity – translating American mythologies of rebellion into a distinctly Scottish context. Riding without waterproofs, despite the climate, symbolised the prioritisation of authenticity and toughness over practicality, echoing Harris' observation that biker identities are often performative as much as functional.

REBELLION & ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Motorcycling in this period can be read as a dual rebellion against wider societal expectations, and against personal familial structures. Like Hall's (1990) conception of identity as 'a production, always in process', biker identity was not fixed but negotiated through practice, storytelling and collective action. In the absence of institutional preparation for adulthood, the motorcycle community offered an alternative education. Skills in mechanics, risk management and social negotiation were developed informally, demonstrating Harris' (1985) argument that biker culture was 'a school of life' as much as a leisure pursuit.

CONTINUITIES & CONTEMPORARY RESONANCES

While the cultural forms of motorcycling have diversified, many of the dynamics of the 1970s endure. Contemporary events such as Malle Mile and The Bike Shed illustrate what Hall (1990) describes as the hybridity of identity – younger riders integrate retro machines, custom builds and festival culture while sustaining the same search for belonging. Harris' insight that motorcycling reflects a tension between marginality and community remains valid: though fragmented into 'little leagues', the sum of motorcycling cultures continues to resist mainstream assimilation while fostering fellowship.

CONCLUSION

The case of motorcycling in 1970s Edinburgh demonstrates how machines, spaces and rituals facilitated both rebellion and identity formation. Situating personal experiences within theoretical frameworks offered by Harris and Hall reveals how motorcycling operated simultaneously as a form of resistance, a cultural identity and an informal educational system. While the scene has evolved, its enduring emphasis on camaraderie, authenticity and cultural resilience ensures that motorcycling continues to function as a meaningful subculture in contemporary society.

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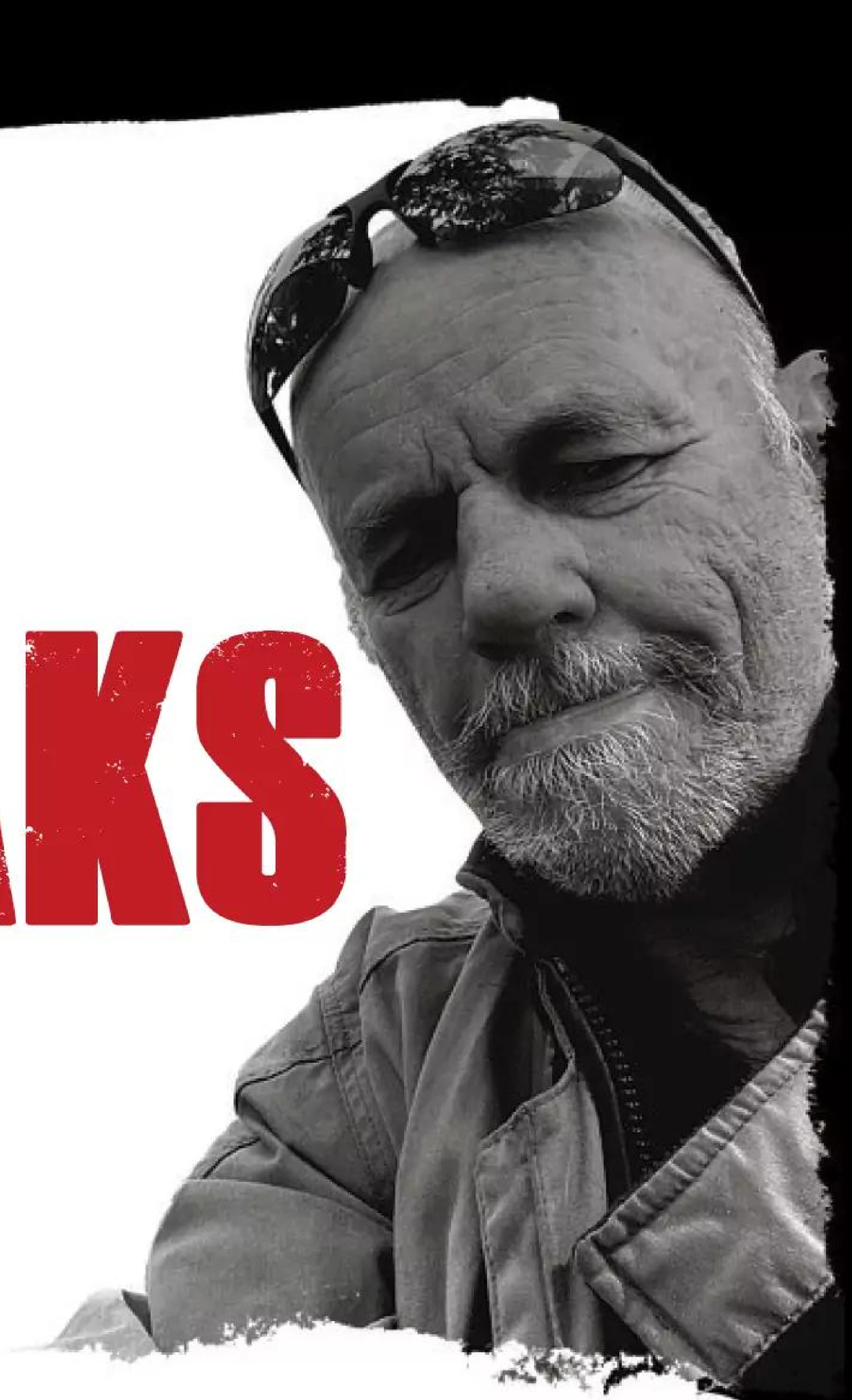
JOHN BOYLE

MUTCH SPEAKS



I WAS SITTING IN A CAFE IN GLASTONBURY WHERE I LIVE THESE DAYS, AND A GUY CAME IN AND SAT DOWN AT MY TABLE WHERE HE WAS APPROACHED BY SOMEONE WHO ASKED HIM HOW HIS HIP OPERATION'D GONE. IT WENT WELL APPARENTLY, BUT THE SURGEON WOULDN'T LET HIM KEEP THE PIECE OF BONE THEY REMOVED. I HAD TO INTERVENE TO FIND OUT WHY NOT.

"IT was considered a biohazard" replied the elderly guy. I pondered this for a bit, and it took me back to 1973 when the helmet law was introduced. There was something absurd about the refusal to meet the patient's request that struck a chord with me. Before leaving the cafe I sought confirmation that I had heard right.

"A biohazard?" I asked.

"A biohazard" he replied before returning to the dissection of a slice of sugary cake with a fork bristling with lethal prongs. He'd looked forward to carving the bone into something interesting, and I totally get that. No doubt the bone's now decomposing in a bio bin surrounded by armed guards employed by an off-shore based security company. God forbid, a dog should intervene and carry it off in its mouth.

In April I had the remains of my teeth pulled out in Istanbul (by dentists, I hasten to add), with the assistance of a great deal of anaesthetic. I requested my property be returned to me, and it was - there was none of this biohazard nonsense, and I returned to my hotel room where I suspended the gory remains of my fangs in a plastic bag as I gaped, toothless, at the bathroom mirror for a selfie that I circulated by Whatsapp to horrify friends back home. This was in April, and today I'm striding around like a young George Clooney, smiling at women who smile back and reach for their autograph books. What has this to do with the issue of risk and our right to embrace it you may ask? I'm rambling, aren't ?

People and institutions that try and protect us from risk to ourselves need to try riding hardtailed Triumph chops with rabbit-ear pullback handlebars through the Balkan mountains in November. A biohazard indeed! The youth of today, it seems, have become so risk-averse that it's a miracle we're still allowed to ride motorcycles at all, let alone modify them so much they scarcely resemble the donor bikes on which they're based. More amazingly, we're still allowed to ride them without the addition of extra wheels. And who have you got to thank for this liberty? You guessed it – MAG.

I'm not going to claim that motorcycles would've been banned by now, but there's a good chance they would've had their power capped, and the right to modify them far more restricted than it has been. To be fair, someone should've stopped me riding my criminally butchered Bonneville from London to Athens via the then old Yugoslavia in 1980 and, after a ferry trip from Piraeus to Haifa, further south to the Red Sea through the Israeli/ Palestinian West Bank (delete as you think right), but no-one did, possibly because no-one cared if I lived or died.

Anyway, three years after this trip I got wind of a new motorcycle magazine being launched by a bloke called Steve Myatt. This was going to be totally different to anything populating newsagents' shelves at that time – it'd be a full-on custom magazine that spoke to the new culture of DIY enthusiasts inspired by the movie Easy Rider a decade earlier. I was still a ship's officer in the merchant navy at that time, and'd never considered being a motorcycle journalist. I didn't care which bike went one mph faster than another, or could negotiate the Isle of Man bends a nanosecond quicker than a ground-to-air missile. I'd never been to a race meeting in my life. In 1969, however, I had settled into a cinema seat in East London where Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper were cruising across the screen to the sounds of Dylan's 'Wasn't Born to Follow' on the coolest bikes I'd ever set eyes on. "That's me" I thought, "that's where I want to be." There's no way I could write competently about the comparable merits of the latest factory bikes, but custom bikes and the culture they encouraged? That was something I instinctively felt far more in tune with. Some of you may remember Maz Harris; Dr Maz as he had a PHD. Maz was a great guy, and persuaded Steve Myatt that his new magazine needed a column from a founder member of the group that existed to protect the lifestyle that the new title sought to reflect.

Well, here we are 42 years on and, after a long absence, I have another opportunity to write for the one title, the only title amidst a publishing world of total indifference and lemming-like self destruction, to recognise the value of MAG and support its work. My thanks to Nik. Long live biking, and long live BSH.

IAN MUTCH
MAG FOUNDER
MEMBER & PRESIDENT

RICK HULSE

AS AN ELDER STATESMAN (READ AS 'OLD C**T') OF THE BIKING COMMUNITY, I OFTEN FIND MYSELF MEANDERING THROUGH THE POORLY LIT, AND OFTEN FAIRLY TWISTY (OR SHOULD THAT BE 'TWISTED'?), HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS OF MY MEMORY.

MAY THE MOIRAI OF MOTORCYCLING SMILE UPON YOU

Often I'm simply revisiting those halcyon days of riding on open roads under beautiful clear blue skies but, other times I'm musing on memories of UK riding, where the sky often tended more towards fifty shades of grey, but the memories are no less precious for that.

After indulging in one particularly intense foray into the misty recesses of my memory, I emerged from the depths of my subconscious mind and, like the unctuous zombie of a failed Salford gangster emerging from one of the no doubt many shallow graves on Barton Shit Farm (or Barton Sewage Treatment Works, as it's no doubt referred to in polite society), I was left with two rather jarring thoughts incised into the anterior aspect of my psyche. The first thought was, 'With biking memories going back nearly 50 years, I can no longer consider myself to be, by any stretch of the imagination, a young man.' Fortunately, before this disconcerting revelation had the chance to sink its razor-sharp talons into the soft pink ductile flesh of my relatively fragile ego, it was casually brushed aside by the brash arrival of my second subliminal observation, which declared in no uncertain terms, 'I should've died so many times! How the hell am I still here?'

From the very outset, even the most audacious of gamblers'd never've wagered on my longevity. My first road-legal motorcycle was a lime green MZ TS125, that I bought on tick (hire purchase) way back in May 1977. I was a first-year apprentice at a heavy engineering factory in Stockport at the time and, being under 18 years of age, my Dad had to stand as guarantor on the credit agreement.

Most of the other first-year apprentices in the factory were getting Honda SS50 or Yamaha FS1E mopeds. The MZ TS125, being of East German manufacture, was not only a much sturdier piece of kit, but also bigger, cheaper to buy, and much faster than the mopeds. It was also pig-ugly, with a petrol tank designed to look like a polished breeze block that came up to the level of my bellybutton. In those less constrained days, people were permitted to ride motorcycles up to 250cc on a provisional licence – Compulsory Basic Training (CBT) courses wouldn't appear for another 13 years, and motorcycle training schools were as rare as tits on fish. Basically, you taught yourself to ride and, if you stayed alive long enough to get the hang of it (sadly, many didn't), you booked a test and trusted to luck. In retrospect, I now realise that my survival of my first year of riding a motorcycle on the road had much more to do with luck than skill or judgement…

I collected the MZ from Hyde Road Motorcycles in Manchester after finishing work on a Friday. The shop owner asked me if I'd ridden before? I said: "Oh yes, I've been riding off-road for years!" but, in truth, my only previous experience of riding motorcycles was on a Suzuki K50 moped that was jammed in third gear, that I and my mates ran around on in the woods until it blew up when we tried to run it on some industrial alcohol we had 'liberated' from a railway workshop. After just two minutes' practice in the cobbled alley behind the shop, I set off into rush-hour traffic for the twelve-mile ride through the city centre and up into the quaint little fishing village of Wythenshawe. How I survived that journey I'll never know! I lost count of the near misses and irate drivers, but I remember vividly that you couldn't have got a five-thou feeler gauge between the cheeks of my arse during any single second of that terrifying journey.

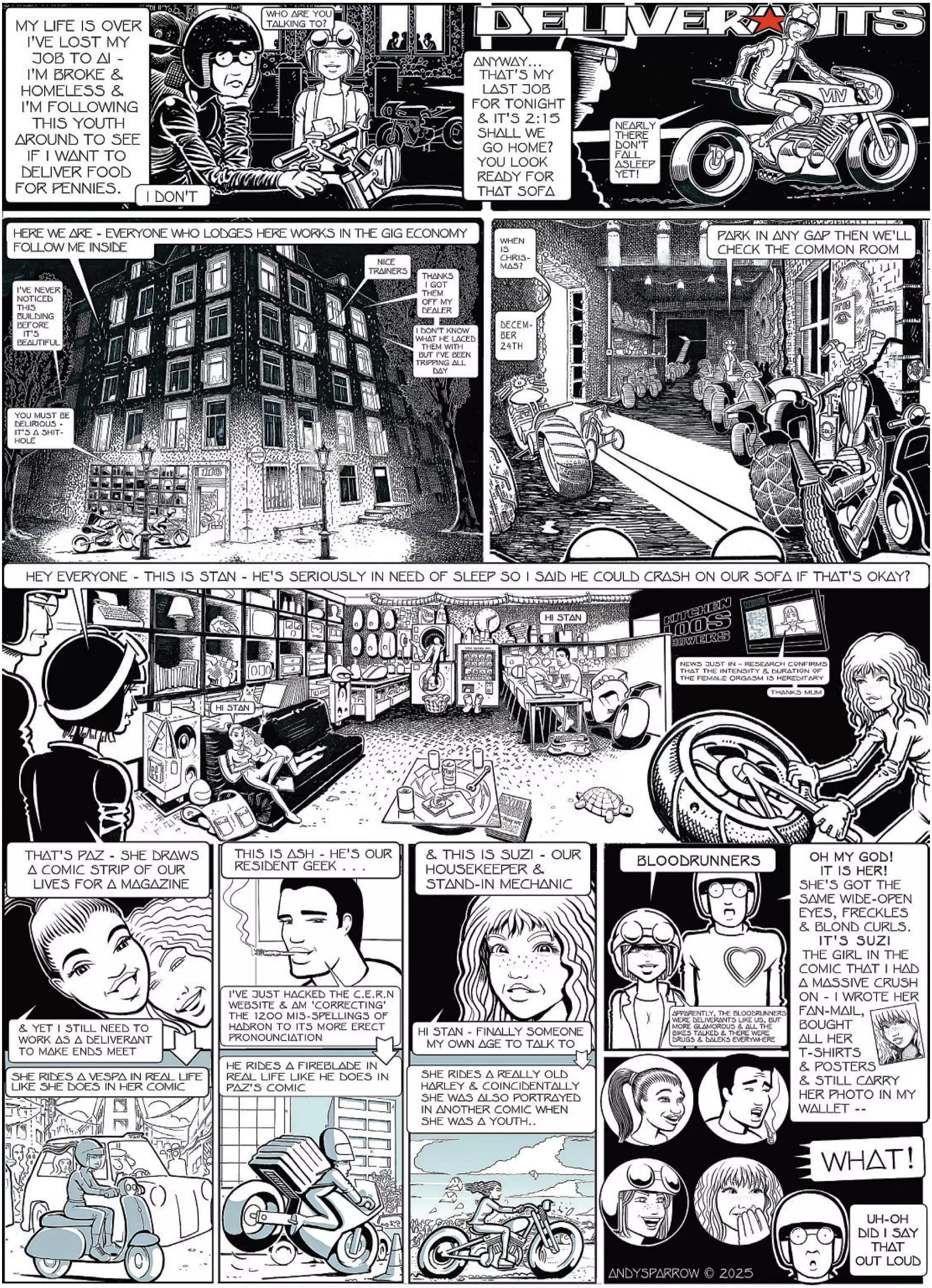
Within a few days my confidence grew, and I was soon belting around the Cheshire lanes doing 60mph and feeling like the king of the road (a feeling I've never lost when riding a bike or trike). Inevitably, before too long I suffered my first accident, though it was due to excess libido rather than excess speed. As I cruised round a broad bend on a quiet suburban street, my eye, and therefore all of my attention, was caught by a mini-skirt-clad lady bending over the bonnet of an Austin Allegro car as she washed it. Unfortunately, both my eye and my attention were reluctant to forsake this real-life incarnation of a Benny Hill sketch, right up to the point where I slammed into a stationary milk float.

It was at this point I experienced the TS125's greatest design flaw. As momentum catapulted me along the seat, my groin met the back of the slab-like petrol tank. Suffice to say, my ardent libido quickly took a back seat due to the front seat being steadily filled by my rapidly swelling and badly impacted bollocks. As my stomach churned and my traumatised testicles began throbbing to a samba rhythm, the attention-grabbing washer of shit cars rushed across the road to see if I was alright, at which point I raised my visor, made a vain attempt to appear nonchalant, and projectile-vomited all over her rather pert chest.

This was by no means my last motorcycle accident but, at least for a while, if my concentration began to drift while riding, my subconscious 'copilot' would cause me to glance down at the unmistakeable, apple-shaped indentation in the back of that lime green petrol tank, and my attention would be restored instantly. There've been so many instances of inexplicable survival in the face of boundless folly over the years that I can but thank the fates for their unwavering forbearance and, as the bikes got bigger, the intensity of my lunacy increased exponentially…

More next time.

RICK HULSE


MY LIFE IS OVER I'VE LOST MY JOB TO AI - I'M BROKE & HOMELESS & I'M FOLLOWING THIS YOUTH AROUND TO SEE IF I WANT TO DELIVER FOOD FOR PENNIES.
WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?
I DON'T
ANYWAY... THAT'S MY LAST JOB FOR TONIGHT & IT'S 2:15 SHALL WE GO HOME? YOU LOOK READY FOR THAT SOFA
DELIVERANTS
NEARLY THERE DON'T FALL ASLEEP YET!
HERE WE ARE - EVERYONE WHO LODGES HERE WORKS IN THE GIG ECONOMY FOLLOW ME INSIDE
I'VE NEVER NOTICED THIS BUILDING BEFORE IT'S BEAUTIFUL
NICE TRAINERS
THANKS I GOT THEM OFF MY DEALER
I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE LACED THEM WITH BUT I'VE BEEN TRIPPING ALL DAY
YOU MUST BE DELIRIOUS - IT'S A SHIT-HOLE
WHEN IS CHRIS-MAS?
DECEM-BER 24TH
PARK IN ANY GAP THEN WE'LL CHECK THE COMMON ROOM
HEY EVERYONE - THIS IS STAN - HE'S SERIOUSLY IN NEED OF SLEEP SO I SAID HE COULD CRASH ON OUR SOFA IF THAT'S OKAY?
HI STAN
KITCHEN LOOS SHOWERS
HI STAN
NEWS JUST IN - RESEARCH CONFIRMS THAT THE INTENSITY & DURATION OF THE FEMALE ORGASM IS HEREDITARY
THANKS MUM
THAT'S PAZ - SHE DRAWS A COMIC STRIP OF OUR LIVES FOR A MAGAZINE
& YET I STILL NEED TO WORK AS A DELIVERANT TO MAKE ENDS MEET
SHE RIDES A VESPA IN REAL LIFE LIKE SHE DOES IN HER COMIC
THIS IS ASH - HE'S OUR RESIDENT GEEK . . .
I'VE JUST HACKED THE C.E.R.N WEBSITE & AM 'CORRECTING' THE 1200 MIS-SPELLINGS OF HADRON TO ITS MORE ERECT PRONOUNCIATION
HE RIDES A FIREBLADE IN REAL LIFE LIKE HE DOES IN PAZ'S COMIC
& THIS IS SUZI - OUR HOUSEKEEPER & STAND-IN MECHANIC
HI STAN - FINALLY SOMEONE MY OWN AGE TO TALK TO
SHE RIDES A REALLY OLD HARLEY & COINCIDENTALLY SHE WAS ALSO PORTRAYED IN ANOTHER COMIC WHEN SHE WAS A YOUTH..
BLOODRUNNERS
APPARENTLY, THE BLOODRUNNERS WERE DELIVERANTS LIKE US, BUT MORE GLAMOROUS & ALL THE BIKES TALKED & THERE WERE DRUGS & DALEKS EVERYWHERE
OH MY GOD! IT IS HER! SHE'S GOT THE SAME WIDE-OPEN EYES, FRECKLES & BLOND CURLS. IT'S SUZI THE GIRL IN THE COMIC THAT I HAD A MASSIVE CRUSH ON - I WROTE HER FAN-MAIL, BOUGHT ALL HER T-SHIRTS & POSTERS & STILL CARRY HER PHOTO IN MY WALLET --
WHAT!
UH-OH DID I SAY THAT OUT LOUD
ANDYSPARROW © 2025

COMPETITION

THANKS FOR ALL THE COLOURING. YOU COULD COLOUR THIS ONE (OR ONE FRAME) TOO, TO ENTER. BUT THIS MONTH'S COMPETITION IS SPOT THE DELIBERATE ERROR! IF YOU WANT TO ENTER, EMAIL ME ON **andy@deliverants.uk** OR SEND A LETTER TO ME, ANDY SPARROW, AMHURST, HARNHAM LN, WITHINGTON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE GL54 4DD (THIS COMPETITION ENDS WHEN NEXT ISSUE APPEARS - COLOURING AT THE END OF THE YEAR)

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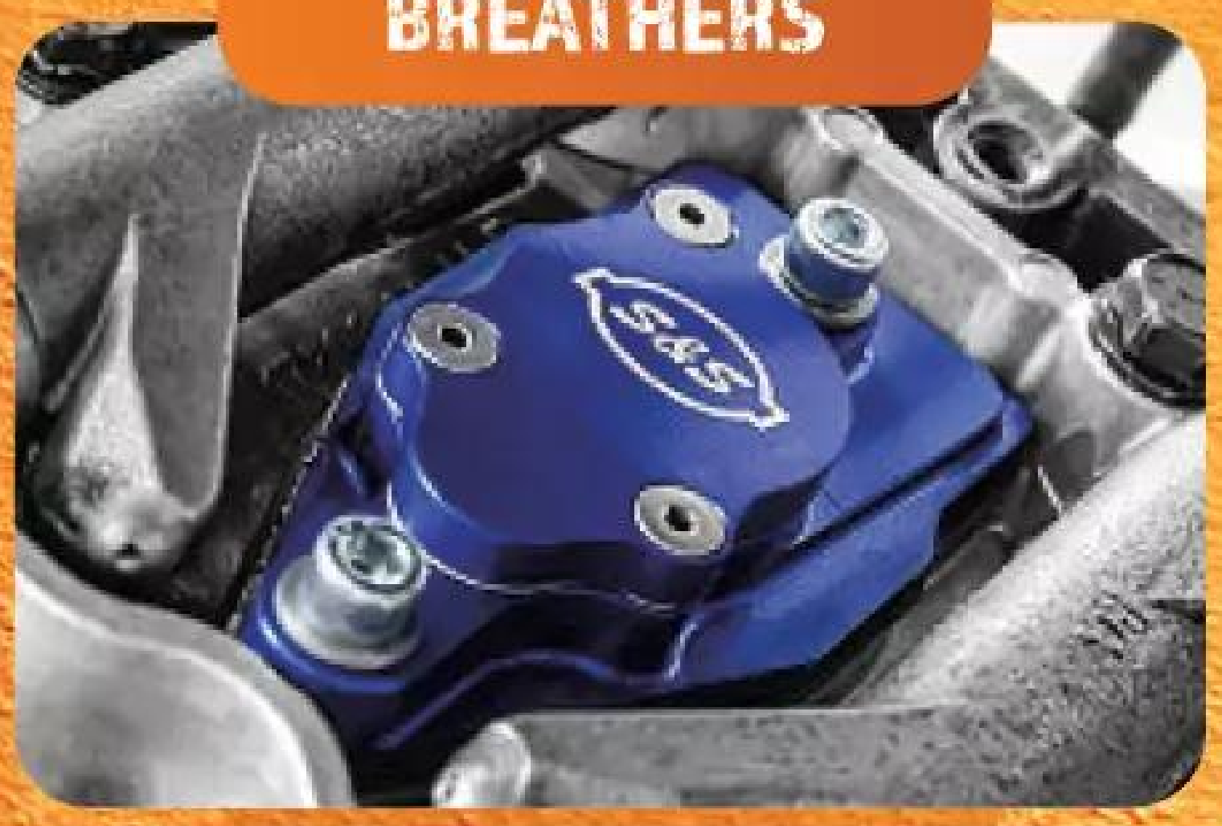

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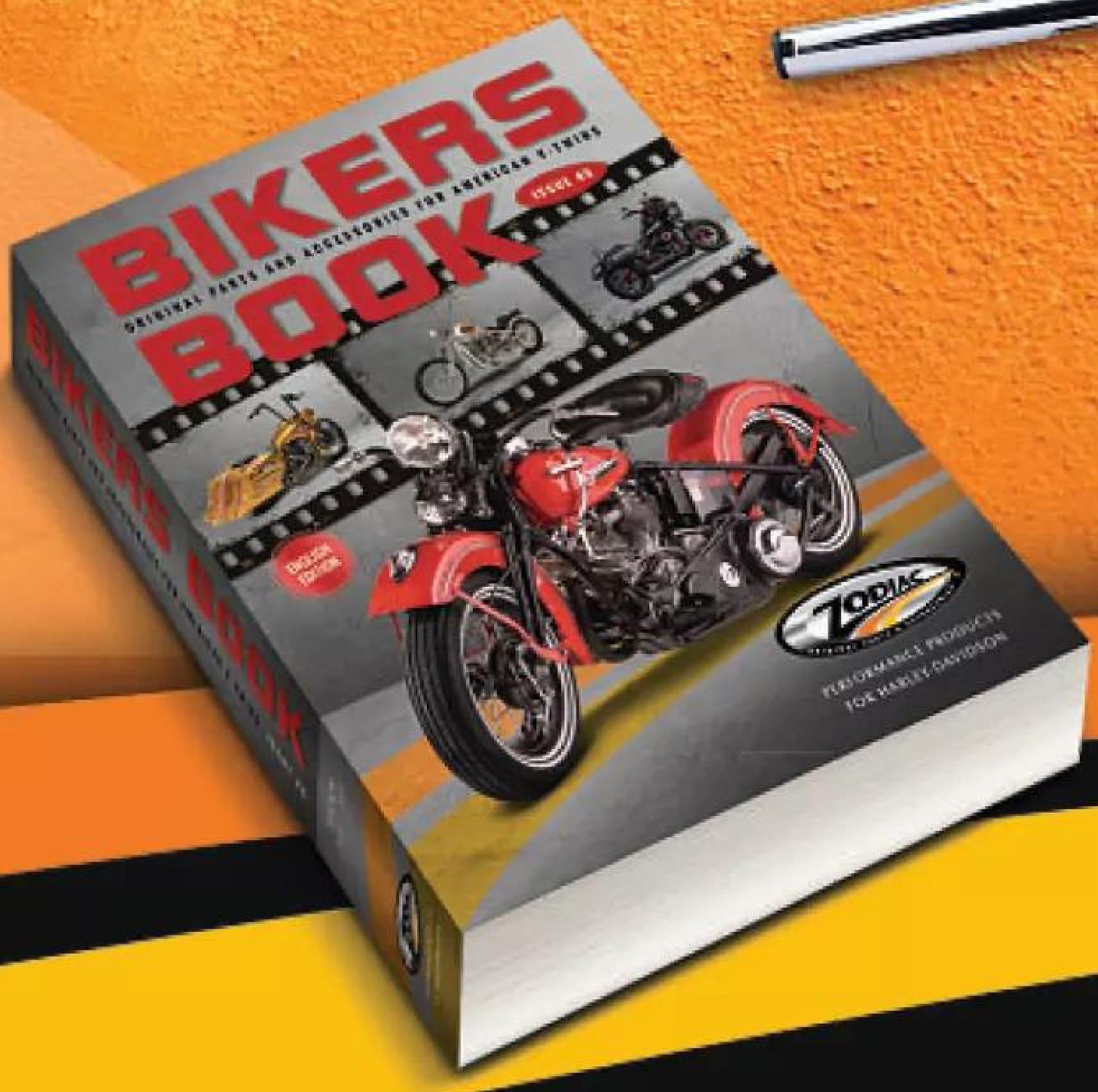

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